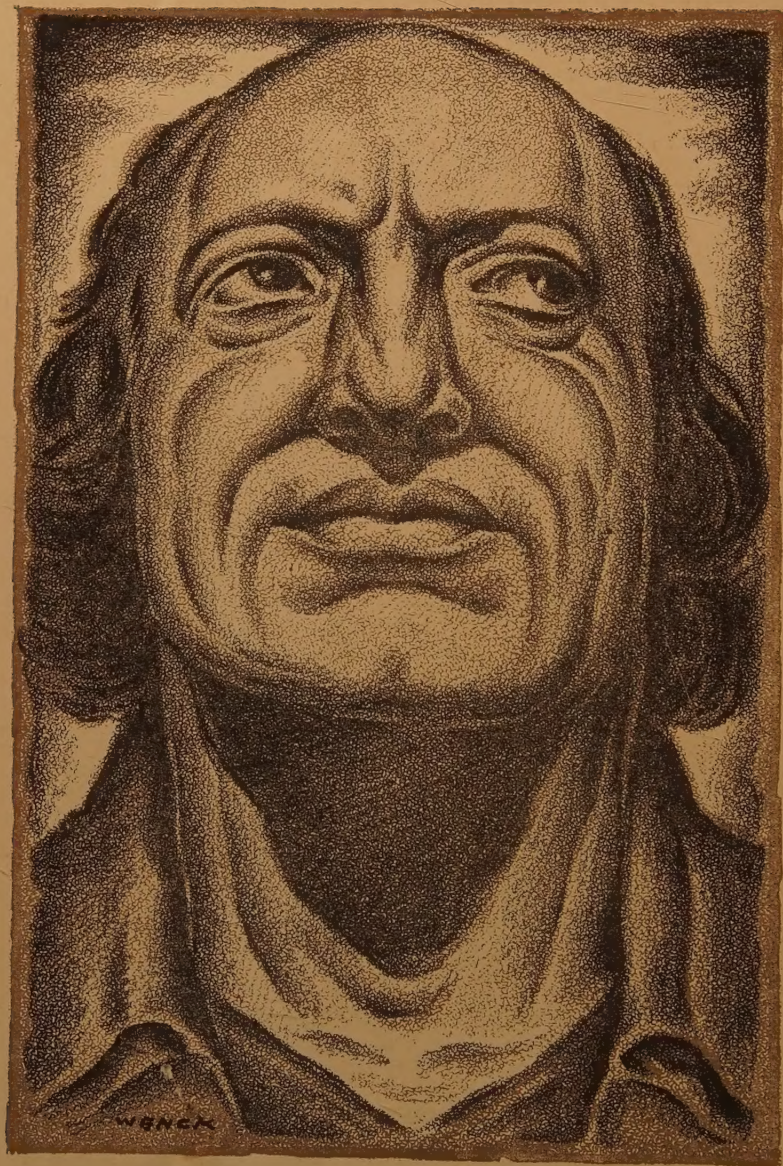






A. A. Ledgar.

CAGLIOSTRO



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JOHANNES VON GUENTHER



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**TRANSLATED BY HUNTLEY PATERSON
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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PUBLISHERS - HARPER & BROTHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON ~ 1929

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PRINTED IN THE
UNITED STATES
FIRST EDITION

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TO MY FRIEND
KURT THESING
IN MEMORY OF
UNFORGETTABLE
YEARS



CONTENTS

I Palermo	1
II London	22
III St. Petersburg	72
IV Strassburg	133
V Paris	203
VI Boulogne Sur Mer	394
VII Rome	423
Epilogue	443

ILLUSTRATIONS

Cagliostro	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	<i>Facing page</i>
In a moment he was sitting astride the loose masonry, peering into the darkness	2
<i>Porco! Porco!</i> What a terrible plight he was in!	46
In a flash she had snatched a little dagger from beneath the pillow	108
A look of gloomy ferocity came into his dark and distorted features	164
At the end of the long street stood the dark and threatening mass of the Bastille	208
A deafening cheer rose on the quay from the throats of thousands of disciples shouting their farewell	420
Rome	438

CAGLIOSTRO

Palermo

THE notes of a bell rang faint and continuous through the rainy night; from the tower of the Benfratelli Monastery in Cartagirone the clock struck the hour of ten, and far away in the west the sky was rent by the lightning of the dying storm. The air was full of the fragrance of wet earth and vernal growth.

A small figure, clad in black, was trying to climb over the low, slippery wall encircling the monastery grounds. His dark cowl, as sombre as the night about him, bulged in the blustering wind and hindered his movements, which, in any case, were none too agile, for he constantly slid backwards, and was already panting furiously. At last a happy thought struck him.

"*Figlio d'un cane!*" he growled under his breath. And he pulled himself up with the help of a cork tree, whose low hanging branches reached close up to the wall.

In a moment he was sitting astride the loose decaying masonry, and trying to peer into the darkness about him. The mulberry trees, heavy with rain, rustled in the darkness. Far away, to the east, enveloped in inky blackness, Etna roared and rumbled. And, amid the hum and murmur of the night, he heard the shrill thin tones of somebody whistling.

Uttering a mild curse, the squatting figure threw his other leg over the wall, and with many a bump slid headlong to the ground and to freedom. The wall was not high, and the thud of his fall was drowned by the howling wind. In a moment there was a crackling of the brushwood, followed by the sound of short hurried footsteps groping their way into the darkness beyond—he had escaped!

Twenty minutes later the youth was peeping cautiously through a crevice in a dilapidated hut, of the kind used by goatherds for shelter on a stormy night. A fire of loose rubbish, made up chiefly of wet twigs, was burning in the hut and sending forth volumes of smoke. Two ragged boys were sitting beside it, making a meal of dried cheese, and one of them, scratching himself thoughtfully, said:

"*Maledetto!* I wonder whether he'll come after all? Do you think they've caught him in the act?"

"Nobody can catch him! But the weather is so villainous," yawned the other, as he began peevishly to explore a nostril with his finger. "We ought to try whistling again . . ."

"All right," agreed the first speaker, "I'll whistle just once again! But that'll be the end. We can't wait for him all night. As it is, Master Marano will certainly thrash us for getting home so late."

Suddenly they heard a clucking sound behind them, and turned round in alarm. A fat unctuous voice rang out from the blackness: "To the devil with Master Marano if he dares to touch a hair of your heads! Master Marano is waiting for the treasure."

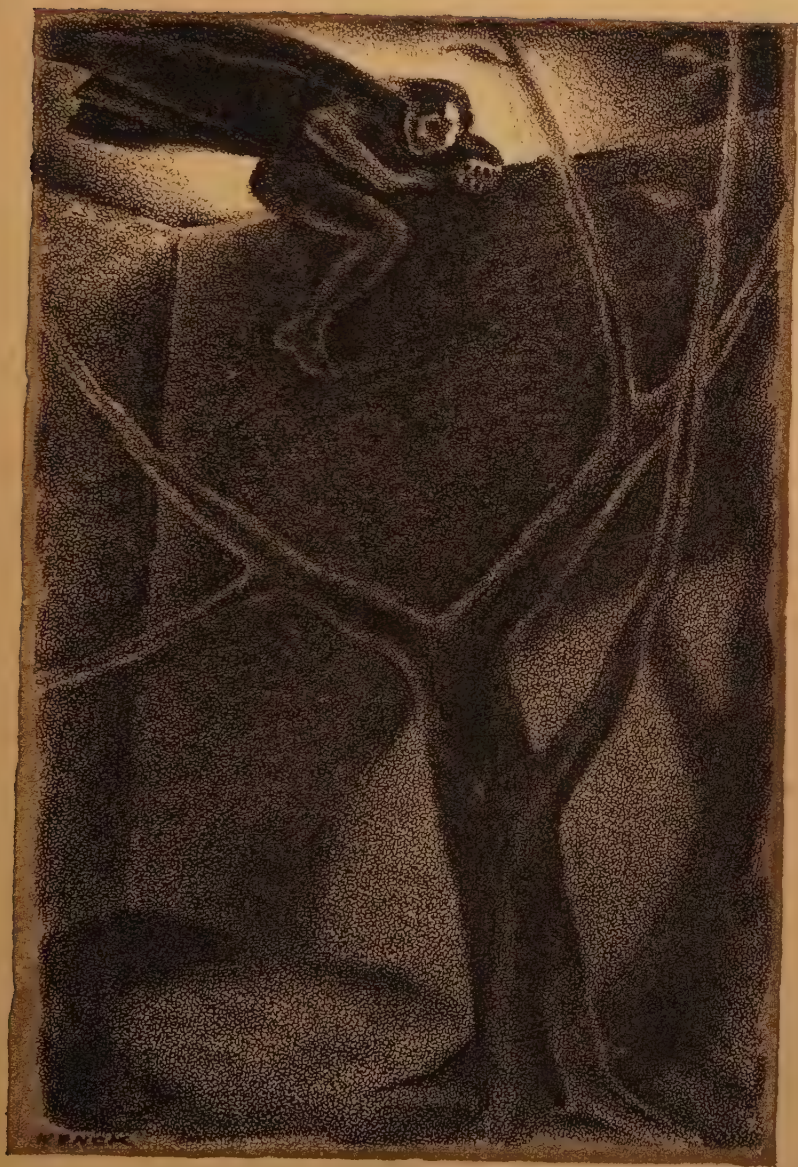
Shouting for joy, the two boys sprang to their feet, and as they moved in front of the fire, their forms were cast in long wild shadows across the walls of the hut.

"*Per bacco!* Giuseppe is back again!"

They dashed out into the open, yelling, and dragged the little fat figure, cowl and all, into the hut.

Halting in front of the fire, he installed himself with grotesque dignity on the greasy floor, which was covered with dry dung, and, crossing his legs, scrutinized the happy faces of his friends with a look of feigned severity in his deep-set eyes.

"Yes, my good friends and respected apprentices of the noble master goldsmith Antonio Marano of Palermo, Giuseppe is back again. Your captain and ringleader, whom you have missed so long, is back among you. Now we shall start our



IN A MOMENT HE WAS SITTING ASTRIDE THE LOOSE MASONRY,
PEERING INTO THE DARKNESS

old devils' tricks again. Woe to the smug and respectable bourgeois! Never again shall they mure me up in a monastery!"

A roar of laughter rang through the hut, and the fat lad, who was about fourteen, calmly took stock of his jubilant companions. About his two huge nostrils lurked a thousand joyous and cunning wiles, and he passed a finger once or twice thoughtfully over his huge chin, which was thrust forward.

"This is my third escape. Twice I ran away from the seminary of St. Rocco, and now I have run away from the monastery of the black crows. And no devil will ever get me back there! But it was not at all unpleasant after all. When I came down from the reading-desk to my meals, instead of reeling off pious legends by the yard, I used to serve them up with spicy tales, until the holy walls themselves cracked and went all blue. At other times, when I was reading the martyrologies, instead of the names of the holy saints, I used to substitute the names of our Ninas, our Barberinas and our Truffaldinas, with various approved et ceteras—the slut, the sailor's whore, the Muscovite sow, etc. It was lovely! They beat me, they punished me, they kept me on bread and water, they locked me up in the dark like a rat—it was no good. Giuseppe did not give way. Things only began to be a bit uncomfortable when a little while ago they threatened to plunge me twice a day into cold water, so as to rid me more effectually of the Evil One. I had to run away after that! Nasty wet water! That's the only thing that can frighten Giuseppe Balsamo. But haven't you any brandy?"

A flask was quickly handed to him. He put his nose to it, smelt it, grunted discontentedly, and then pressing the nozzle to his lips, took a hearty draught. Whereupon, setting the flask before him, he wiped his lips with the back of his hand.

"Pah! filthy spirits of wine!" he exclaimed, and blinking at the two boys, who were observing his every movement with the utmost awe, he added: "Why, I drank better stuff with my apothecary." He nodded eloquently with his large heavy head, and then passing his fingers through his dishevelled, coarse

blue-black hair, he asked: "What message has Master Marano sent me?"

They both gabbled the answer together, interrupting each other in their eagerness to please him. "He is delighted. . . . He is expecting you to-day. . . . He has promised to marry your sister, provided that the treasure. . . . He is wriggling with impatience. . . . He threatened us with a good hiding, if we came back without you. . . . He sends you his kindest greetings, and would be only too glad to start off to-day. . . ."

"Pooh! Master Marano will have to wait." The words of the fourteen year old Sicilian rang out haughtily. "Marry my sister? I should think so indeed! What condescension!" he continued scoffingly. "Madonna Balsamo will find a better match than that rickety old stick of a goldsmith. You must go home without me. I shall only be able to come to Palermo to-morrow, or the day after. The police are after me and I must call on my uncle first."

"On Messer Cagliostro in La Noava?" one of the boys enquired in awe, his eyes open wide with wonder.

Giuseppe spat contemptuously into the fire. "Yes, of course, my most gracious and wealthy uncle, Don Cagliostro, *major domo* to His Serene Highness." He stopped and thrust his chin forward.

The two boys opened their mouths wide, and looked at each other in alarm. They were certain to get a hiding now, if Giuseppe, instead of going with them to Master Marano, wanted to see his high and mighty uncle first.

"But what about the treasure?"

"It won't run away. The goldsmith will get his heathen trash all in good time. But enough of that Father for the present. Let me tell you about the apothecary. I picked up something with him, boys, I can tell you. It will make your hair stand on end. Oh, my dear old Althotas, how you will rave to-morrow morning, when you discover that your beloved Acharat has bolted, and made himself independent! I learnt things from him, my lads,—well, you'd hardly believe it. . . ."

Grinding their teeth and smacking their lips in their eagerness, the boys drew closer together. The little fire was smouldering now, and threatened to go out at any moment. Outside, pale stars were twinkling between the rolling clouds. In a sonorous whisper Giuseppe began to recount his experiences.

Tall, lean, blue-eyed, with bright-coloured hair, now a little grey, his fingers covered with valuable rings, Messer Alessandro Cagliostro, the pampered bachelor *major domo* of His Serene Highness at La Noava, stood before his ragged and unkempt nephew. He wore a coat of bottle-green velvet with gold buttons, and a silk jabot of a delicate lilac shade, edged with the finest lace; but his nephew was still wrapped in the little black cowl, and moreover looked so tired and forlorn that the very sight of him stirred the heart. His uncle was a man of fifty, his voice though gentle had a commanding and metallic ring, and his choice of words betokened superior culture. As he spoke he tapped the inlaid rosewood table in front of him lightly with his finger.

"Treasure, my lad? The world is full of treasure everywhere. Hadrian was certainly a great Emperor, and it is quite possible that the philosopher's tower on Mount Etna conceals all manner of remarkable things. But what has that got to do with me? A peaceful occupation, good food, a sound digestion, refreshing sleep, and now and again a little distraction—these are things worth more than all the phantoms on earth. I cannot stand extravagances. By all means partake a little of the spice of life; it can do no harm—a few stanzas by the great Monsieur de Voltaire, a little idyll with a village nymph, provided they give her a bath first—'pon my soul, no reasonable person could take exception to such doings. But as for legendary treasures buried under the soil and described in the high-falutin' MS. of some ignorant mediæval monk, and reported by a—h'm—by a somewhat unruly nephew, who reeks of everything except incense, no, my dear Giuseppe, I am not to be caught by such wild fancies. I congratulate you, however, on

the fact that you can find in your heart no vocation for the cloister, all the more so as I—h'm—have the honour to belong to a Society, which regards the spread of benighted Church doctrines as a great danger to humanity—but . . . as a little while ago we happened to touch on the theme of our family relationship,” and here a faint smile gleamed coldly from his eyes, “what after all have I to do with the son of a kinswoman, who contrary to my good advice married a petty tradesman? And I know of other relatives—I have thousands of brothers, tried and worthy members of the Society to which I have the honour to belong, who stand infinitely closer to me. No, no, my dear boy, you can't persuade me; I have not the slightest intention of furthering your plans, or of taking charge of you. But here!” he continued, taking a coin from a pocket in his jabot, “here's a ducat for you, and pray be so good as never to show your face in La Noava again.” As he flung the coin in the boy's direction his glance was withering.

Giuseppe frowned angrily. Turned down! Odious pedant! His lips quivered half in defiance, half in distress, but he did not take the money. His deep-set eyes were fastened on the old dandy. But the latter only shrugged his shoulders.

“I can also give you a piece of advice. You're a powerfully built lad. Your mother's brothers, the Fratelli Cagliostro, are bell-founders in Messina. Be a bell-founder! It is a good productive calling.” Then striding carelessly to the window, he called out, “Saddle the white mare, I am going for a ride.” Whereupon, with a cold contemptuous smile, he contemplated the vigorous, squat figure of the fourteen year old youth. “No, no, my dear nephew, give up your illusions; you will never be able to improve yourself.”

“You are very hard, uncle. . . .”

“A bell-founder, as I say, a bell-founder. Cagliostro Brothers in Messina, as I say, that seems to me—h'm—to constitute your future. And now, my dear boy, I must ask you to be good enough to excuse me.” He extended two cool condescending

fingers to the boy. "Remember me to your mother, Madonna Felice!"

Great tears of defiance stood in Giuseppe's eyes. In the green shade of the beautiful olive tree outside, his uncle's room looked so wonderfully stately. Rosewood, mahogany, silk, bronze fittings, and china—aye! the sort of home Giuseppe hoped he might one day have himself. He flung his head back insolently and challenged the elegant bachelor with his eyes.

"My mother thanks you for your kind message. I shall not even give it to her." He bowed defiantly and took the gold coin, more out of embarrassment than anything else, half inclined in his heart to fling it at his uncle's cool face. He restrained himself, however, and merely left the room. Even when he was outside he could feel his uncle's cold indifferent eyes on his dirty, bare, sunburnt neck. He rubbed it with his sleeve, and from the moisture on the coarse black cloth he saw how heavily he must have been perspiring.

The day was hot. The white flame of the Sicilian sun burnt in a completely blue and cloudless sky. Palermo was many miles away and the boy was seized with faint depression. What had his uncle said? He had mentioned a bell-founder. It was too ridiculous to deserve a moment's thought. Giuseppe had not the slightest intention of tramping all the way to his uncles in Messina. For then he would be obliged to work. And something very different from work was in his mind. Ambitious hopes throbbed beneath his shabby black cowl. Had not his scented dandy of an uncle spoken of a certain Society?—Yes, he had—a secret Society. The air was full of rumours about such bodies. How splendid, how magnificent to be at the head of such a confederation some day!

As he walked along Giuseppe tried to picture in his mind the kind of Society to which his uncle belonged; but he was not very successful. His youthful imagination was filled to bursting with stories of pirates, highway robberies, gunpowder, slave-raids, buried dungeons, poisons and daggers. But all his daring flights of fancy fell hopelessly flat, the moment he at-

tempted to fit his dandified uncle into the crude picture his mind had conjured up. Anything he did must certainly be quite different—something hidden and concealed, but all the more secret on that account. Giuseppe vowed that he would find out all about it.

Maledetto! How the sun burned! A small orange-grove by the wayside looked tempting with its fresh shadows, and Giuseppe halted and dropped on the moist grass beneath the trees. The people at the monastery must long ago have discovered his absence, and the good old Father Apothecary was certainly bewailing the fact that he no longer had a Giuseppe. The boy's large head became one broad grin. The dear foolish old pill-monger, with his eternal fables from the East—pyramids with underground vaults, Kings of Trebizond, howling Dervishes, and secret magic writings in far away Medina—these had been the favourite ingredients of his oriental mixtures! Giuseppe shook with silent laughter. The Father had always called him Acharat and himself Althotas, from the story of the ignorant young prince who was conducted by his wise teacher through every quarter of the globe and taught the mysteries of every science. Prince Acharat of Trebizond—not a bad name in any case! It was better than Giuseppe Balsamo!

The rest had done him good; but now his stomach began to raise a clamour. *Sapristi!* Why had he shared his provisions with silly old Marano's two mangy apprentices only the night before? Woefully he thought of the nice fat chicken and the beautiful ham, smoked with aromatic grasses. The subdued chimes of a bell ringing the hour of midday informed him that there must be a village close by. And at the same moment he remembered the ducat he had received in La Noava. He was immediately comforted. Throwing off his tell-tale cowl, which would be certain to put people on his track, he rolled it up and, putting it under his arm, walked on in his shirt sleeves. It was nothing to him that there were holes in his trousers, nor did he care much that his feet were naked in the dilapidated old boots many sizes too large for him. One day he

would make up for it by wearing velvets and silks, like his uncle, and morocco leather shoes with bronze buckles.

Smoke curled its way upwards from the chimneys of the village inn. Giuseppe smacked his lips in anticipation of the good things that awaited him. His mouth watered, and a look of curious content filled his hard and insolent boyish eyes.

“Take the prisoner away!”

Giuseppe, completely unnerved, stood like a bundle of misery before the portly and pitiless mayor of the village, and once more protested his innocence. The ducat had been given to him as a present by his uncle, the high and mighty *major domo* of His Serene Highness. But it was no good! The village Jupiter only thundered: “He is as much your uncle, my boy, as you are a prince in disguise, and not merely a lousy tramp. You stole that money. And for the time being I shall take charge of it. And as for the quack medicines and beauty lotions, you wanted to get round the village women with, they are nothing but goat’s dung mixed with a little water. I have had enough of you! Go to the cells! To-morrow we shall look into the matter again. Take him away!”

The mayor pulled an angry face, and leant back. To have some one marched off and locked up always gave him immense satisfaction, for at such moments he felt he was superior to Madonna Rosalba, the mayoress, with her invincible tongue. To have some one locked up really was a proof of power. It was majestic and legal. It was the law. Or could Madonna Rosalba, by any chance, send a fellow creature to the cells without further ado?

The village prison was small and dark and rank with mildew. It stank abominably of mice. Through the grating of the narrow window, his mayoral majesty’s kitchen could be seen. The cook was scaling fish.

Struggling between his wrath and his tears Giuseppe rested first on one foot and then on the other. So that was all one got for troubling about one’s relatives! One only ended in

prison. To the devil with all relatives! But to-night he would escape. Of course he must escape; he felt he owed it to himself to do so. In any case the police were after him because of the Benfratelli, and so he would kill two birds with one stone. He tried the grating of the window.

"Don't be in such a hurry, sonnie!" exclaimed a deep guttural female voice close by. "I can understand you want to get out; but wait till night-fall."

A ragged old woman with dishevelled grey hair, whom at first, owing to the darkness, he had not noticed, was squatting in a corner and looking at him with a friendly eye. Her lips were constantly working as if she were chewing the cud, and she smiled broadly at him, showing her toothless gums. "Have you pinched something, or have you done 'em in?" she murmured engagingly. "You're a bonny lad, and you'll certainly be something great some day."

This pleased Giuseppe immensely. He had long suspected that he was destined for fame. A merry gleam entered his eye, and feeling flattered, he smiled.

"How do you know that, granny?"

"Dear boy, I am a gipsy. In the village they say I have bewitched two horses. But that's not true. The old crocks died because they were given water to drink at the wrong time, and not because I cast my evil eye on them. You see, I'm an old fortune-teller, sonnie, and although it's no easy matter I manage to make a living somehow. Why should they make such a fuss if a little pigeon or a small cheese happens to find its way into my basket? They surely have no right to put an old woman like me into prison at once for a thing like that!"

She continued to growl discontentedly. Then opening her large whitish-yellow eyes wide she mockingly took stock of the boy.

"So, my darling boy, so you're plunging into life full sail ahead? Is that it? You're a nice one, you are! Show me your hand. You've got no money, eh? It doesn't matter. Just give me your hand!"

Eagerly her thin knotted fingers grasped hold of the boy's fat hand. To conceal his fear, Giuseppe gave a puzzled hollow laugh.

"This is not the last prison you'll be in, sonnie," whined the horrible old hag in honey sweet tones. "But you needn't upset yourself. Lots and lots of money will pass through your pretty hand, lots of money, my sweet boy; and you will have a little wife, and you will be a great man. Oh, what a lot of travelling you're going to do! Far, very far, will you wander, and you will make enemies; but against that, oh, what crowds of women, what thousands of women . . ." and she chuckled quietly to herself.

The youth flushed a fiery red. He was moved, but not unhappy in his embarrassment. She read his hand and looked at him a long while, and an expression of secret cunning stole into her face.

"And now let me tell you something else, my bonny boy—a real gift from gaffer Lucifer himself," and nodding ecstatically, she straightway began to chant: "The fate of man lies in his will. To look with his will through the eyes and into the soul of his fellows, that is the way of the rare man. Concentrate all thy will into thy glance; pierce the brain of thy fellow-man with thine eyes, suck his brain out with thy will. Suck his brain out!" she croaked, "and then he is thine!"

She coughed from sheer exhilaration. And the boy reflected—had he not already noticed that his playmates always betrayed signs of sudden weakening, whenever he stared steadily at them?

"What's your name, sonnie?"

"Giuseppe Balsamo."

"You will be a great man some day, my little Giuseppe, a great nobleman, possibly a prince. But beware of women, beware of women. . . ."

A shadow darkened the cell. In front of the narrow window there stood Madonna Rosalba, the mayoress, tall and haggard, the terror of her lord and master.

"Young man," she whispered sharply, "hi! young man! Give me your ointment, and I will set you free!"

"And what about my ducat?"

"You certainly stole it, but I will give it back to you, my boy. But before I do so, you must swear that your beauty mixture will really work."

In the twinkling of an eye, Giuseppe crossed himself. "God strike me dead this minute, if within the course of three weeks, from new moon to full moon, you do not become the most beautiful woman in Sicily, provided that you put the ointment on your skin every night at the hour of the second vigil. The preparation was made in the monastery, Signora."

The shadow vanished. A few minutes later the key grated in the rusty old lock, and the cook stood in the doorway. "Hand over your balsam, my boy," she said, and at the same time reluctantly handed him the ducat. Giuseppe drew a little box from his trouser pocket, and carelessly handed it to her.

"Haven't you another one for me?"

"No, my beauty!" he replied, staring impudently at the girl.

"Well then, look sharp and get away. In less than an hour the Mayor will be thinking about sending the watch round."

Eagerly the boy snatched the coin from her, and dashed out of the cell. Throwing a disdainful glance at the old gipsy, the cook bolted the door again.

Giuseppe had run hardly thirty yards before he halted, panting for breath. He pulled out the ducat. Its red-gold surface looked dull in the crimson light of the sinking sun. Irresolutely he weighed the piece in the palm of his hand. It was covered with fish scales. But fish scales meant luck. A good-humoured grin broke over his thick wild boyish lips. Captiously he crept on his belly round the house he had just left, and when he got to the door of the prison, he laid himself flat on the ground. Then he began to scratch the earth. Yes, it was all right; at a pinch he could squeeze his hand under the door.

"Granny!" he cried in a hoarse whisper. "Granny, you who told my fortune, here!"

"What, you here again, my darling boy?"

"I forgot to wish you good-bye. Just put your hand out here, will you?"

The old woman's withered yellow hand was pushed under the door, and Giuseppe nearly cried when he saw the discoloured skin, under which the veins stood out so prominently. Softly he stroked her hand and murmured: "Many thanks, granny. I took good note of all you said. And so that everything may be fulfilled, take this."

He pressed the ducat into her fingers. The old woman uttered a faint cry and withdrew her hand. Shaking with suppressed laughter, the boy raised himself from the dust.

Over stones, jagged rocks, and loose boulders, and still he ran; and how he could run! He dashed his feet against the unevennesses in the ground, and stumbled over fragments of lava; but he ran. The yells of the infuriated goldsmith, Marano, could still be heard behind him: "What have you done with my gold? Where are my sixty ounces of gold?"

Bitterly as he resented it, Giuseppe was running for his life. He knew the way. In the impenetrable twilight of the early dawn, Marano would most certainly lose himself. Sixty ounces of gold! That was loot with a vengeance! At last the way into the wide, wide world was open to him. Now he could tread the highway which was to make him a great man and an aristocrat.

It had all been very simple. At the point where travellers begin the ascent to the last-formed crater on Mount Etna, in that grim region of lava, ice, snow and volcanic ashes, fire and desolation, there stands on a small plateau the ruined walls of an ancient quadrangular building. According to native tradition these ruins are called the philosopher's tower. It is said that the great scientist Empedocles built the tower the better to be able to observe his beloved volcano on the spot, and fur-

thermore, we are told that the Emperor Hadrian once lived in it, in order from its parapet to be able to enjoy the imposing panorama of the rising sun that can be seen from this point. The Father Apothecary had told Giuseppe there was a rumour that in the old days of war and strife, a great treasure had been buried under its walls; but that up to the present all attempts at finding it had failed. It was from these details that Giuseppe's shrewd brain had concocted a plan that was wholly worthy of him.

Giuseppe had known Marano, the narrow-minded, superstitious goldsmith for some considerable time, as the squinting craftsman was paying court to his sister, Maria. But she would have nothing to do with the shrivelled up conceited old bore, and during the whole of his year of trial as an apprentice to the apothecary at the monastery of the Benfratelli, Giuseppe had racked his brains to discover a means of fleecing the well-to-do goldsmith of some of his wealth, in order to obtain the wherewithal to leave his native land and start on the joyous travels after which his soul yearned.

So one day a mysteriously and exceedingly illegible note found its way from Cartagirone, into the workshop of the industrious goldsmith; for the young apothecary's apprentice found letter-writing by no means easy. As, however, the note, in addition to mistakes, was full of dark hints, and artful insinuations, Marano set off on the road to Cartagirone himself; for, in addition to everything else, he was as inquisitive as a magpie.

And thus in the garden of the monastery of Cartagirone, the compact was solemnly sealed. One hundred ounces of gold—sixty was the amount eventually decided upon after much haggling—were to be sacrificed to the evil spirits to propitiate them and prevent them from hindering the discovery of the treasure; and, in consideration of this outlay, the whole of the valuables found was to be divided equally between Marano and Giuseppe. It was furthermore agreed that Marano should do the digging, while Giuseppe declared himself ready to under-

take the much more arduous and perilous task of exorcising the spirits.

On the night of the day on which he had made his first acquaintance with the four walls of a prison cell, Giuseppe paid a secret visit to Marano, for he had every reason to fear that the police were still on his track; and that same night the two treasure-hunters set out. The goldsmith had long ago made the necessary arrangements, for it had been settled between them that Giuseppe should escape from the monastery on the first dark night after the new moon. Thus, after all manner of difficulties, for the road was long and arduous and full of terrors, they had climbed up to their destination.

At midnight, by the tragic light of the flaming crater, and to the gruesome accompaniment of the rumblings and groanings in the depths of the volcano, the urn containing the sixty ounces of gold was buried. And it was at this juncture that the few scraps of ecclesiastic and scientific Latin which Giuseppe had been able to pick up in the last twelve months, proved so extraordinarily useful. While the faint-hearted Marano grew whiter and whiter, and shivered and shook with fear and horror, the impudent young scamp, in hollow and sepulchral tones, declaimed yards and yards of bombastic nonsense, describing fantastic signs with his arms, stamping his feet, snorting, and generally behaving like a lunatic.

Then Giuseppe showed Marano the spot at which he was to begin digging; and the latter, groaning and sweating, dug for all he was worth, while the exorcist, calmly arrogated to himself the fatiguing task of lying on his belly over the place where the urn of gold had been buried, in order, he explained, to keep off the evil spirits and prevent them from stealing the propitiatory gift before the work was finished.

When at last the pit was over six feet deep, and Marano, who was by now completely exhausted, had struck his spade against no treasure, but continued to shovel up nothing but rubble and fragments of masonry, something terrible occurred. A dark devil with fluttering black wings and glowing eyes sud-

denly flung himself, snorting and stamping, on the goldsmith's back, and tried to hurl him, exhausted as he was, into the pit. But even the wiliest of devils may sometimes miscalculate and thus it came about that the two fell headlong together into the pit which the goldsmith had dug.

Marano, who thought he would die of fright, roared desperately for Giuseppe, especially as he was suffering agonies from the weight of the devil who was lying on top of him in the pit. But no Giuseppe appeared, and meanwhile the evil spirit who had knocked him down did not release his grip for a moment. And then it suddenly struck Marano, that according to all the rules and regulations of hell, devils, demons and such-like, when once they have done what they want, throw off the mortal coil and resume the ethereal livery of invisibility. But the devil that had attacked him seemed to be an exception to this rule. Moreover he stank—not of pitch and sulphur, but unmistakably of garlic. And it was this that gave rise to the first suspicion in Marano's mind. Had not he and Giuseppe partaken of garlic sausage just before midnight?

It was Giuseppe! A resounding box on the ears recalled him to his senses. He swore he knew nothing about it. Probably an evil spirit had crept into him while he had for a moment been overcome with sleep. That seemed credible enough. They scrambled out of the pit together, Marano in front, because he was suspicious. Then they ran as fast as they could to the buried gold. The urn was empty! In vain did Giuseppe loudly protest that this too must be the work of a devil—it was no good! Marano thrashed him unmercifully; he beat him to a jelly, and tanned his backside as only expert Sicilians know how to deal with this useful part of the human anatomy. At last the unfortunate boy, whose cries and howls were heartrending, resolved to die, in order at least to obtain a moment's respite.

And he contrived to die in the most masterful manner. No spark of life appeared to be left in him. Marano was beside himself with fear. He had not intended to go as far as that!

He shook him and rubbed him, and at last went in search of water, in the hope of restoring the poor boy to life.

Unfortunately for Giuseppe, the goldsmith chanced upon a spring not more than a hundred yards away, and that was why the boy now had to run so fast. For as soon as Giuseppe heard Marano splashing about with the water, he shot up, like lightning, snatched up the sack of gold which he had carefully hidden behind a rock close by, and dashed headlong across country, hotly pursued by Marano, who was shouting at the top of his voice. For, strange to say, the latter had, all of a sudden, seen through the whole business.

And how Giuseppe ran! He ran like a weasel. With the assurance of a sleep-walker, he met and overcame all obstacles. He paid no heed to bruises, scratches, or grazes. The fact that his back burnt like fire seemed a small price to pay for the golden destiny which he was now carrying in his hand. He would willingly have paid much more heavily. He ran for his life, he ran for the noble rank he would one day secure; he ran, as no fat boy of Palermo had ever yet run up hill—and slowly the distance between him and his pursuer increased.

The die was cast. Now he would be compelled to turn his back on his native land, whether he wanted to or not. The police were already on his heels, and if the Marano affair also became known. . . . He shuddered. Never before had anyone received such a thrashing. He put his hand to his sore buttocks and felt them. And in spite of the darkness he could see that his hand was all wet with blood.

Nevertheless he gave vent to a careless laugh and continued running. Sixty ounces of gold! *Corpo di bacco!* It had been worth while!

He ran and ran. Dwarf birches loomed before him like ghosts in the leaden twilight of the dawn. The belt of woodland swallowed him up. It was growing lighter every minute.

Was it really the police? It looked like it.

His back and buttocks felt like one vast wound. His shirt

had stuck fast to his skin, and to move was extremely painful. But it was even more painful to sit down, and that is why the fat fourteen-year-old young Sicilian preferred to walk up and down, always up and down, a form of activity which to some extent he found helpful, for. . . .

He was now at home.

His dear old mother was sitting there with her hands folded in her lap; her hair was still fair, her eyes were still blue, and she looked so kind, so unconscious, it seemed to him, of all the grand schemes he had in his mind. His pretty sister, with her broad, somewhat elderly features, faintly pock-marked, sat there quietly crocheting, and both the women cried over him, and gazed at him in astonishment.

Had he not felt forced to come to them? Of course he had. Looked at in the right way, it was nothing less than his duty. For did they not believe in him a little?

"And so an old gentleman has already come to enquire after me? *Santo porco!* There are surely plenty of old gentlemen in the world! It was the police, of course!"

"He looked like a holy father. . . ."

"Of course he did! That's a favourite form of disguise! We know all about that! And what did you say?"

"What the goldsmith told us—that you would soon be here."

Giuseppe, inflated with self-importance, stood still and stamped his right foot imperiously. "Oh, you women! Fancy going off at once and telling the police what Marano had whispered to you in confidence! *Porco! Porco!* I am, it is true, a great criminal, but . . . ah well, instead of taking my ease at home, I must take to my heels at once and flee to the Continent."

With an expression of infinite superiority, the boy surveyed the two women. "What is there to be done?" he asked. "Women will always be women, I suppose. With all due respect, you are nothing but barn-door fowls, silly, terrified, chattering creatures. Oh if you only knew an atom of what I have in view!" Once more he paced to and fro, for when he stood still his back

stung like fire. "Nothing but barn-door fowls! The clouds rain a little trouble over you, and lo, you all huddle together under shelter and cluck and cluck! *Sapristi!* Don't you know yet that you've got a real man in your family? True he is only just fourteen, but his crimes already stink to heaven, and he is on the road to becoming a great duke . . . yes, I mean it, a duke, and he will have a wonderfully beautiful wife—pray do not smile, Madonna Felice!—and he will be rich too, *corpo di bacco*, immensely rich! You haven't the faintest idea!"

He was well pleased with what he had said. As proud as a turkey-cock, he continued his march to and fro.

"Hens! Hens!" he scoffed. "Are you aware that this morning I got the cruellest thrashing that a Sicilian has ever yet received? But what does Giuseppe Balsamo care for that? It may not even be the last. But I know one thing, it won't prevent me from pursuing the mighty path of glory, my dear little hens."

"Won't you want at least a little clean linen?" his mother interposed timidly, for the sake of something to say.

"Clean linen! Madonna, I implore you to think for a moment of what you are saying. The police are on my track, and you worry about trifles like that! An adventurer needs no linen. I possess a thousand ducats. I am a member of three secret societies, confound it! I shall soon probably work my way up to the throne of the Two Sicilies—and you go and talk to me about clean linen! And so the police officer looked like a holy father, did he? Indeed, I expected as much. Yes, Madonna Felice, now we must wish each other good-bye."

He halted, and tried to puff out his chest, although the word good-bye had already brought tears to his eyes. His mother looked desperately up at him, and her face twitched.

"My boy, my boy," she stammered. "Must you really go? When shall I see you again?"

Fat and forlorn he threw himself on his knees before her and looked up into her kindly features. "Mammi," he gasped helplessly. And then a thought struck him: "She will have to

be as fair as you are, otherwise I shall not marry her. Do you hear? That's quite certain." He stopped and a smile broke over his face. "Mammi . . ." He nestled his great huge square head in her little hands, and she laid her sweet sad face on his dishevelled hair.

"My dear, dear boy. . . ."

There was a knock at the front door below. For a moment they all held their breath. Was it the police? Giuseppe was about to spring up, but his mother held him gently back, and gazed calmly and kindly into his eyes. Slowly she made the sign of the cross over him. "God bless you, my boy." She had to clear her throat, for she found it hard to go on. "God help you, and may God give you . . ."

Almost roughly he tore himself away from her. One last kiss, and the great sinner and criminal stumbled bravely down the stairs to the front door. Outside he saw a black cowl, and full of dignity he stepped towards it.

"Acharat, at last!" exclaimed the old man.

Giuseppe had not expected this. What? For was he not a great criminal, and lo, instead of the police, there, in front of his door, stood his dear old silver-haired Father Apothecary.

"Acharat, Prince Acharat! . . ." and the old man embraced him.

A thousand resolutions simmered in the boy's brain. It boiled over and burned with a new light, with new knowledge. In a trice Giuseppe's voice became deep and mature. "I am not going back again. Either you go with me, Father Aloisius—no, henceforward only Master Althotas, or . . . we must part. So you were the police? Well, no matter, I will imagine that you are. It serves my purpose better to imagine I am pursued by the police. Come with me. I have already made all arrangements. At midnight the schooner *Hope* will put to sea. She is going to Malta. I have no time to lose." He cast a glance up at the lighted window above his head, behind which he knew his mother was sitting.

"Have you money then?" the old Father asked in bewilderment.

"Money? Pooh!" The boy made the gold pieces ring in his trouser pockets.

"Acharat . . ." and the Father Apothecary suddenly looked very old in the faint light of the distant candles. "Where did you get that money?"

"Farewell!" The youth, who was still on the point of tears, tried to show a bold front.

"Well, so be it, to Malta. . . . I worked for two years in the alchemic laboratory of the great Master Pinto. . . . To Malta. . . . It is true that I am a priest, but when it is a matter of the damnation of a soul that has been entrusted to me. . . . Giuseppe, I can't let you go into the world alone. . . . Men are so wicked. . . . How could my boy Acharat survive the test without his master Althotas? I knew at once that I should find you at your mother's. . . . She is so fair and kind. . . ."

"Master Althotas, beware of women!" Giuseppe's voice was still deep and mature. And thrusting his chin forward, he tried to look wise.

"Fair and kind . . ." muttered the old man to himself. "She will have given you her blessing. . . . To Malta. . . ." The old man straightened his bowed back, and looked dreamily towards the east. "Malta, a great island, with many opportunities. I could work for Pinto again, and earn a living for both of us. And you could help me. . . . But I don't know whether it would not be better for us. . . ."

The boy shook his head resolutely. "Let us go!" And he plucked the old man's sleeve.

"I was wondering whether it would not be better for us to go direct to Rome," continued the venerable old Father Apothecary, as he reluctantly followed in Giuseppe's footsteps.

The boy's deep-set black eyes pierced the darkness. Far away Etna roared and growled. The slender crescent of the new moon shone like a thin streak of light in the dark sky.

London

PEA-SOUP! The thick yellow London fog crept through every crevice, stole through every window sash, oozed round and under every door, and rolled down the chimneys into every room, leaving a trail of coughing, gloom and dirt in its rear. Although it was but midday, candles were burning everywhere, especially in the darkest and narrowest streets of the town, known as the "City," where the counting-houses of all the large firms and the lawyers' offices are to be found.

A thin veil of pea-soup hung over the dreary office of Mr. Reynolds, the solicitor. Two candles were burning on the writing desk, before which the thin, wizened, clean-shaven Englishman was sitting. Mr. Reynolds was about forty years of age, and his pale grey eyes were as cold as his voice. His dark grey coat looked as if it had been woven out of the dust of old documents, mildewed articles, and the mists of family secrets. He stared blankly before him, as if lost in thought, while his fingers toyed with a pair of snuffers.

Separated from him by a thin encircling veil of fog, and leaning against a desk, was another man, one of the solicitor's clients. He was a tall, extremely emaciated Scotsman, called Mr. Scott, with a pasty skin, and a hectic flush on his cheeks. His bony fingers pulled his moustache, which was as carefully tended as his oily voice.

"A necklace like that," said the solicitor in supercilious tones, "is certainly very often a source of danger. Quite unwittingly one may one day find oneself hanged by it."

"A gold necklace, with sixty-two small brilliants," whined the client. "It was in a gold casket too."

Mr. Reynolds drummed on his desk with the snuffers. "And now the Italian to whom you entrusted it, declares that he can. . . ."

"Quite right," Mr. Scott hastened to interrupt. "He says he can increase the size of the diamonds and multiply the volume of gold tenfold. He says, for instance, that when small brilliants are buried to the accompaniment of cabalistic formulæ, and left beneath the soil for some time, they become soft and swell. But they can be hardened by means of a red powder, called *Barba Jovis*, and in this way can be made so large that they are worth a hundred times as much as they were before."

A faint cold smile on the solicitor's face left little doubt regarding the hopeless view he took of the case. "I understand," he snarled. "It is always the same old story. And how much did you offer to pay him—I mean the Italian?"

"One hundred and seventy pounds, sir, particularly as he has a knowledge of cabalistic numerals, by means of which he can tell the winning numbers at Lotto."

The thin Englishman gazed dreamily into the candle-light. "On the one hand, I readily acknowledge that Pietro di Abano, Raymundus Lillus, Nicolas Flamel, Agrippa of Nettesheim and Paracelsus made gold, and were, moreover, regular mines of magic knowledge. On the other hand, I cannot blink the fact that, all we seem to hear about nowadays, is bogus hierophants, who pretend to know the secret of the *materia prima*, and really haven't the faintest conception of it. They secure a large following, if only they know how to open their mouths wide enough. For, as everybody knows, there are always plenty of fools about. But we, we who know, and are initiated into first principles. . . ." He stopped significantly, and then with a weary effort he continued. "It seems to me that your Italian is as impenetrable as the . . . as this thick fog, which turns our

days into nights, Mr. Scott. I presume that he also practises astrology?"

"He does, indeed," the other admitted with some hesitation.

"I thought as much." The solicitor struck the table sharply with the snuffers and suddenly cast a stern look at his client. "They are always the worst." The tone in which he had just spoken sounded so unfriendly that Mr. Scott was taken aback. "By means of a few sound astrological calculations and well-founded forecasts they acquire a certain amount of credit, which they proceed to exploit for their own fraudulent ends. Have you ever tried to get round his servants, Mr. Scott?"

"Yes. . . ." The answer came somewhat hesitatingly. "It is useless. One can get hardly anything out of the boy. The Italian must have bewitched him with his great devil's eyes. It is easy to see that the servant would be amenable to a present or two, and would be glad to blab, but his mouth seems to be sealed by some spell. That's strange, isn't it? Besides. . . ." The Scotsman faltered, and looked uneasily at his lawyer, "as we happen to be discussing the servant. . . . The Italian and his servant have. . . . But you must not put a wrong interpretation on this, sir. . . . The other night in Hyde Park, the two of them saw Mrs. Fry and me. . . ."

"Really?" The lawyer once more into space.

"Yes, on a bench. Tiresome!"

Mr. Reynolds' face grew distinctly yellow. "I suppose I need not trouble to ask whether he recognized you? Extraordinary idea—Hyde Park. For you live in Chancery Lane, sir!"

The Scotsman lowered his eyes. "Mrs. Fry is so unaccountable."

The lawyer was silent. The streaks of fog seemed to grow thicker between the two men, and to be enveloping their two heads in a gauzy cloud. Suddenly the solicitor rapped the table again with the snuffers. "The incident may lead to much unpleasantness. But, no matter, we must not shirk the struggle. The Italian has all kinds of—of Hyde Park adventures to his

credit. Just listen to what my clerk has to say." And he rang a bell.

The damp fog circled round indignantly. A smart young man, dressed in a blue suit, with fiery red hair, and a pen behind his ear, flitted into the office. "Mr. Reynolds" . . . and stiffening into a formal bow, he allowed his bulging eyes to rest enquiringly on the small nickel bell.

"You already know Mr. Scott, Will? I thought as much. Mr. Scott would be deeply interested to hear the information you have gathered about the Italian."

A second formal bow. The bulging misty grey eyes turned from the nickel bell in order to rest on a bronze button on Mr. Scott's jabot. The shadow of a smile glided over features which were almost obliterated by deep wrinkles. Like an automaton, the clerk ground out the report in a sing-song voice.

"Giuseppe Balsamo, Horbury Crescent, at the house of widow Green, thirty-three years of age, of Papist persuasion, married. Born in Palermo on the 8th of June, 1743, spends his life travelling, dabbles in alchemy, magic and Hermetic arts. Lives in grand style, although source of his income is uncertain. Stayed in London four years ago, lawsuit with Nathaniel Browne, Quaker, for painting his country house with obscene frescoes, and for the seduction and getting with child of his daughter, up to that time a virgin. Escaped his sentence by fleeing to Paris, on his way whither he made the acquaintance of the bailiff Duplessis. Allowed the latter to travel alone in a carriage with Mrs. Balsamo, but on the other hand borrowed money from him. Wife ran away in Paris; according to all accounts there was a police scandal."

The piece of clockwork suddenly stopped. Its eyes wandered imperceptibly back to the nickel bell. The dry lawyer dismissed the man with a wave of the hand. But it did not seem as if he had gone out, but as if the fog had sucked him into the gloomy writing den on the other side of the door.

"A nice how d'you do!" Mr. Scott remarked feebly.

"So you see," observed the lawyer in stern tones, with a slight wave of the hand, "we can lay hold of him. He is a pander, a ravisher, a seducer, an adulterer and a person of no morals—quite an amusing fellow. Just sign the power of attorney here, and to-morrow I shall have Balsamo placed in custody. Then the necklace will be. . . ."

"For Heaven's sake!" stammered the Scotsman excitedly, as the hectic spots on his cheeks grew deeper and deeper, "don't dream of doing anything of the sort. If you do that, every chance, every possible chance of ever getting them will be for ever lost. . . ."

"Who? What?" exclaimed the lawyer, looking at his client with a sour expression.

"Why, the *Barba Jovis* and the Arabic Manuscript."

"Fairy tales!"

"But I saw the red powder with my own eyes, and also the manuscript which contains the instructions for making the *materia prima*. Both of them come from the East. You need not shake your head, sir. I know what I am talking about. Twice already has he told Mrs. Fry the right day and the right number, and each time she won at Lotto. At home I have a small piece of gold which he made out of lead under my own eyes. Besides, what do you imagine he lives on, eh?"

"On the hundred and seventy pounds given him by a certain Mr. Scott, for one thing," the lawyer replied, unconvinced.

"Impossible!" cried the Scotsman, wringing his hands. "He lives on a most lavish scale, sir, on a most lavish scale! Can that be done on a hundred and seventy pounds? No, no, he certainly gets it from the *Barba Jovis*, but he is so infernally lazy that, instead of spending his days and nights over his crucibles, he prefers to spend his time drinking and sleeping, and leaving his precious manuscript to get covered with mildew."

"And you really believe this?" exclaimed the lawyer, his eyes trying to penetrate into the foggiest recesses of the Scotsman's soul. Then, as if speaking to himself, he added: "We

must, of course, admit the possibility. Probably he is too ignorant to turn his knowledge of the great secret to the best account. It may have come into his possession by accident. If only it came into the right hands! . . ." he said no more. Pale green shadows seemed to fall on his fevered face.

"There is no doubt about it," interposed the Scotsman eagerly. "The secret of secrets is in his hands. And, in my opinion, there is only one way. . . ."

The cloud of fog in the office now settled about the candles like a mystic aureole. Pale and jaundiced, the solicitor threw back his head.

"What way?"

The gaunt Scotsman gazed almost tremulously at him. "This is a very serious matter. Don't bite my head off, sir. The Italian's most cherished wish is to become a Freemason. Ever since he heard that I had the honour of belonging to the Lodge of Perfect Freedom, he has left me no peace. As Master of the Lodge, sir, you will know better than I whether I am on the right tack. It may be that Balsamo is unworthy of the great honour of being elected, but . . . what I thought was, that when once the Italian had become a Freemason, and had taken the oath of absolute and unflinching obedience, we might easily compel him to hand over his secret to us."

"And what if, in spite of everything, he refuses to hand it over?"

"Then . . . then . . ." and the Scotsman blinked helplessly into the fog.

The Englishman's stern features hardened; for a moment he contemplated his shining yellow nails coldly, and then observed in resolute tones. "Very well then! Let us fulfil his wishes. Let him become a Freemason. You, Mr. Scott, and little Lord Humber, will be his sponsors. But, in the first place, you must promise me not to breathe a word about the Italian's secret to any one of the brothers. It must be known only to a very few. It is a dangerous secret." His voice rang hollow but imperious. "This much I demand of you, brother Scott,

as your Master. *Union, silence et vertu!*" He turned hastily aside, slid off his high stool and began to walk to and fro in the room. The fog seemed to have grown thicker.

"Meanwhile the necklace can remain in his hands," he murmured resignedly. "If he really possesses the *Barba Jovis*, the mysterious means for making the *materia prima*, for which the very best brains have been seeking. . . . the consequences are unthinkable. Then we shall have the world at our. . . ." He suddenly became silent, and cast a piercing sidelong glance at the Scotsman. "What did the manuscript look like!" The austere and jaundiced Mr. Reynolds had suddenly become very much alive.

"It was a thick red leather volume, embossed with symbolic signs in gold, with gold edges. The text seems to be Arabic, and is written most carefully, just as if it had been engraved. . . ."

"We must take charge of it. In his blindness the Italian is quite capable of throwing such an immensely important work away. . . . In his own interests, it is our duty to take charge of it," remarked the lawyer sanctimoniously.

"He will only give it up on the most crushing terms," the other replied in astonishment.

"The King's Bench has already curbed many a proud spirit." The lawyer halted before the Scotsman, and fixed his glance upon him. A flush of comprehension suffused the latter's face, and, after a moment's confusion he rubbed his hands together gleefully. "And while he is in custody," he exclaimed, "some trustworthy person might quietly get away with the silver casket containing the powder, and also with the leather book."

Blinking furiously, the lawyer put a finger to his lip. "Hush! My dear friend! Be more careful! That is a crime which, under certain circumstances, might land one in Newgate. Be careful! Be most careful! Can you rely absolutely on Mrs. Fry?"

The Scotsman's pasty features twitched. Slowly he drawled out his words. "At first she seemed to be very much interested

in the Italian. She said he had a brutal, masterful nature, and she liked him for it."

The solicitor pointed his finger at him and wagged it to and fro. "There you are! We must be extremely careful, Mr. Scott. *Union, silence et vertu*. Unity, silence and virtue! Not a word to a soul! Within a fortnight Balsamo can join the Freemasons—so that's settled. As a novice. And do not forget to remind him, in season and out of season, of the necklace and of your hundred and seventy pounds."

"And . . . what will happen to him . . . if we . . ." the Scotsman enquired, apparently experiencing some difficulty in getting his breath.

Mr. Reynolds nodded and smiled; it was a somewhat mechanical smile. "Our society is very versatile. One might almost say it is the most powerful in the world. Such treasures must not be desecrated by unauthorised hands. But you were asking what would happen to Balsamo? Leave that to the Grand Masters. I have no doubt they will hit upon the best solution."

"But what about me? What about me?" cried the Scotsman in alarm.

The dry lawyer cast a sly glance at him. "You will be rewarded, Mr. Scott; but do not forget that our oath imposes disinterestedness and unselfishness upon us, when it is a matter of benefiting society." He hesitated a moment, and then half in joke and half in solemn prophecy, he added: "I think I can promise you the rank of Master within a measurable space of time."

The Scotsman's eyes grew dim; it was impossible to tell from their expression whether he had expected more. The fog imparted a yellow tinge to his face.

The masked brother had vanished ten minutes previously.

The Sicilian sat in the small black-draped room and stared at the yellow flame of the candle, drumming with his fingers on a skull which lay before him on the table. What was the mean-

ing of all this play-acting? He had long ago answered the three questions they had put to him, stupid as they had been.

What did man owe to God? Of course he had written "Humility" as the answer, in order to please the man in the mask. What did man owe society? Personally he did not wish to owe society anything, but, *corpo di bacco*, he had nevertheless written "Obedience" against the question, for he was well aware that the other was expecting it. Then, finally, came the most stupid question of all: What did man owe mankind? "Loyalty!" He merely grinned.

At last he had so far succeeded that he was about to become a member of the great secret society, like his uncle, the distinguished dandy of La Noava. Nevertheless, it gave him no pleasure, although it had so long been the object of his ambition. Why was this? Was it the voice of his own soul which whispered to him that it was better for him to remain alone, a free lance; or was it the influence of the Father apothecary, now alas dead, who used to warn him against the Freemasons? Good old Althotas had begged him never to join the infamous Society of Freemasons, and now. . . .

He pricked his ears. Some one was coming. Noiselessly the man with the mask strode across the black carpet and came up to him. "Candidate! The Venerable Master bids you divest yourself of all the metal on your person—the buckles on your shoes, your watch, your sword and your money. You must also pull down the stocking on your left leg, and bare your right shoulder just above the arm."

"What for?"

"Don't ask any questions, but do as you are bid and hold your tongue. I am going to blindfold you now and take you to the temple."

Somewhat reluctantly the fat little man obeyed. Slowly he pulled out his purse and laid it sadly on the table; the thick old-fashioned watch, and the sword followed at the same measured pace. Then he hastily bared his left leg, which though thickly covered with hair, was not badly shaped;

whereupon, doffing his coat and jabot, with almost desperate speed, he slipped his right arm and shoulder out of his beautiful but no longer altogether clean cambric shirt. His arm was muscular and just as thickly covered with hair as his leg, and his shoulder and neck were massive as those of a bull. The man in the mask blindfolded his eyes, and pushed him in front of him.

They ascended some steps. With the sharpened senses peculiar to those who are blindfolded, he divined, after he had gone through the doorway, that they had entered a spacious hall thronged with people.

“Kneel down, candidate!”

What, another senseless command? With great trouble and difficulty he did as he was bidden. A hand removed the bandage from his eyes.

The glare of innumerable candles almost caused him pain. He was kneeling before a throne decorated with masonic symbols, upon which the Venerable Master, an old man of tall stature, sat in solemn state. About the throne the brethren were assembled, with their white leather aprons about their knees, their white silk scarfs round their necks, and holding naked swords in their gloved hands. He turned his eyes upon the lonely figure on the throne.

The Venerable Master, who meanwhile had been taking stock of him, now opened his lips. “In the name of Mac-Benac! Are you willing to take the oath of obedience?”

All eyes were turned upon him. But the kneeling figure did not stir. The Venerable Master repeated the question. With his deep-set eyes all blood-shot, the kneeling figure stared wonderingly at him, as if he did not understand. The candles flickered impartially.

“Giuseppe Balsamo! I ask you for the third time; will you answer me or not? Are you willing to take the oath of loyalty and obedience?”

“Oh Universe! Oh Crucified Lord! Oh beloved friends who sat with me at His anointed feet by the Lake of Tiberias! Oh

Night, oh Darkness of the ages!" The voice of the kneeling figure sounded sepulchral. And lo! when he opened his eyes they seemed to shoot flames!

"Englishmen and brethren, lend me your ears! Oh London Lodge, hearken to me! Rise up, Oh World! Tremble Oh Century! Glow thou Year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six after the birth of my Gentle and Divine Friend and Master. I am prepared to take the oath. But first of all I must reveal to you the name under which, in this age, I show myself to men. I am the Count Alessandro Cagliostro."

"Why, then, up to the present, have you called yourself Balsamo? And who are you really?"

"I am he who kneels before you. Let that suffice!" The kneeling figure rose to his feet and adopting an attitude of great solemnity, threw his head proudly back so that his mighty iron chin was thrust out before them resolutely. He was fat, broad-shouldered and squat. His short, thick neck supported a huge head, under whose square brow the fire of his burning black eyes, which were never still, glowed strangely. Their glance was penetrating as a gimlet. His nose was heavy and turned up, and the nostrils were constantly vibrating. His thick black hair, which was coarse in texture, crowned a figure which, although strangely ugly, was possessed of a certain commanding dignity. His voice was harsh, masterful and very loud.

The Venerable Master gave a faint smile. "You affect a haughty tone; but you were recommended to us by good people. Whoever you may be, therefore, swear to this oath. I shall recite the formula slowly to you, and you will repeat it after me."

The old man stood up. Cagliostro chanted the oath in a harsh, high-pitched voice, although the formula was full of ghastly threats and promises that bound him hand and foot. But the more terrible the meaning the louder did he shout.

Although now and again the shrill fervour of the stranger almost brought a smile to the lips of some of the onlookers, the

temptation to laugh was almost immediately overcome by the atmosphere which seemed fraught with Fate.

The Venerable Master descended from his throne and embraced Cagliostro, and his voice sounded husky. "Let me greet you, Count, as a member of the greatest League in the world!" A murmur of relief rose from the assembled company, and the novice clasped each of the brethren in turn in a fraternal embrace. His eyes sought Mr. Scott. But he was not there.

The Master made a sign. In the twinkling of an eye, as if they had been extinguished by an invisible hand, the candles went out. Slowly and silently one black curtain after another was drawn aside from the lofty bow windows, and a pale mild light pervaded the room.

Footmen in black and gold livery glided noiselessly over the thick carpets. Along the main wall of the room a table was set, covered with a blood-red cloth, and upon it there stood skulls supported on leaden feet. But the liquor they contained smelt of old English port wine.

With a mixture of curiosity and disdain, Cagliostro surveyed the faces of the Freemasons, as he took his place between the Venerable Master and the Terrible Master. The latter was a red-haired coarse-grained Irishman, whose incessant grin gave him the appearance of constantly showing his teeth. No—there was not much in any of these faces, the Sicilian thought to himself. One would soon get the better of them, provided, of course, that it was at all worth while.

The Venerable Master emptied the first goblet in drinking to the health of the new brother. Cagliostro drank eagerly, paying but little attention to the close scrutiny to which he was being subjected by all those present.

"I presume this is your first visit to London, the mother of cities, my Lord?" said the old Master, addressing him. "It is," replied the Count. But when, in spite of long practice in self-control, he felt that he was beginning to blush, he hastily added: "At least, I have been here once before, some time

back, but only in passing." As he spoke, he eagerly scanned the other's eyes. Their expression did not change, but remained cold and faintly respectful as they had been a moment before.

"You must already have seen a great deal of the world then, my Lord?" the Terrible Master observed, again showing all his teeth.

"There is no country, and no city of any size in the world, that I am not familiar with."

"God bless me!" exclaimed the Irishman, and he was obliged to cough. The port wine had gone down the wrong way. Whereupon Cagliostro waxed passionate. "There's nothing wonderful in that. In Medina I was the guest of the Mufti, in Meccha I lived with the Shereef. In Egypt the priests conducted me through the labyrinths of the Pyramids; in Malta I became a friend of the Grand Master; in Rome I had daily converse with the Cardinal of York; through whom I soon became intimately acquainted with Clement XIII; in Constantinople I explored the gardens of the Grand Turk with him as my guide, and in Tibet I fell into disfavour with the Dalai Lama because his good-natured, simple people wished to raise me to the throne in his stead. So I fled *viâ* Peking to East India, and managed to reach Lisbon, whence I came to London. But in this brief sketch I have not even mentioned my visits to the lesser countries of the East."

Exclamations of astonishment filled the room, while Cagliostro quite unperturbed, merely thrust out his chin the more.

"But when and how have you managed to do all that?"

"It is not so wonderful, considering my great age."

The old man interrupted him with a smile. "Considering your great age? But I might be your father! You can't be more than thirty!"

"An optical illusion! It is merely the result of rejuvenation. Why I was a friend of Alexander the Great and went with him to India."

The Englishmen's hearts stood still. What if that were

true! Had not Brother Reynolds dropped the darkest hints about him. And Reynolds was a man of a well-balanced and even sceptical turn of mind. . . .

"And so you possess . . ." stammered the Venerable Master, turning quite pale.

"Quite true, I do possess the secret of eternal life, after which you long so desperately," Cagliostro rejoined affably.

"How do you come to know my most secret wishes, Count?"

"He who is here, knows everything."

Although the minds of the Freemasons still harboured certain faint doubts, they were already impregnated by the seeds of a lively faith in the power of miracles. Had they not already heard sufficiently often of the existence of such chosen spirits in the past? Why should the present century, the century in which they lived, be less momentous? A mysterious bewildering power seemed to emanate from the Italian Count's hard eyes. It was impossible to look into them for long. His glance seemed to penetrate violently into every brain and suck out its contents.

Cagliostro could hardly suppress a faint smile. "Ah my dear old gipsy in that Sicilian village cell," he mused, "never was a ducat more wisely spent!"

Groping gingerly for his words, the Venerable Master resumed the conversation. "The Lodge we are holding to-day, my Lord, has for its special object to instruct you, now that you have been granted the rank of novice, in the constitution and aims of the Society, to which henceforward you have the honour to belong. Have you already been told that this is the Lodge of the Higher Observance?"

"Yes, I have been told that. May I ask what you mean by that term?"

"In contradistinction to the Lodges of Strict Observance, which concern themselves with magic and politics, and to which the Illuminati belong, our principal endeavour is to unravel the secrets of Nature, to perfect ourselves in the science of Alchemy, and above all to discover the philosopher's stone."

Making a sucking sound with his lips, Cagliostro emptied his tenth goblet. "A most laudable undertaking!"

The Irishman grinned. "Well now, Count, it strikes me that you are the very man for us."

"What makes you think that?"

"You know the elixir. . . ."

Cagliostro surveyed the red-haired man with such ineffable contempt that the latter shut his mouth almost with a snap. His reply gushed forth with well-nigh frenzied arrogance. "We, the holders of the great secrets, test our man in a thousand ways, in heart and limb, before we reveal our secrets to one in a million."

The Venerable Master's eyes grew feverish with desire. "Perhaps we may nevertheless hope that, in time. . . ."

The Count literally swelled with pride. "Possibly in time. . . . But I also know a number of other nice little things, more suitable for people as young as you all are. Why insist right away on the *materia prima*? What would you say, for instance, to the fixation of mercury by means of *strattum Saturni*? *Per bacco!* It strikes me that ought to please you too!"

Not a breath was heard. Suddenly from the other side of the table a strange voice was raised. "As an Italian you must surely be a Catholic. Are you not aware, sir, that the Holy Church is a bitter enemy of ours?"

Cagliostro looked up. This cold voice knew more than it actually expressed. He surveyed his unwelcome opponent. He was a thin clean-shaven Englishman. The Sicilian was well acquainted with the kind of foes who unexpectedly rise and shoot their bolts in this way. And he knew that they were always the most stubborn of all. He made a slight bow.

"To whom have I the honour of speaking?"

"George Reynolds, in every day life a solicitor, but as a Freemason, the Treasurer of this Lodge."

—The Treasurer!—Like lightning Cagliostro gave his in-

terlocutor the most engaging of smiles. "We can surely put up with the hostility of the Church," he said.

"Do not underestimate its importance, sir. Next to our Society, the Church is the most powerful organisation in the world. In his famous Bull, Clement XII hurled his *Excommunicatio latae sententiae* against the Society of Freemasons and its members."

A burst of laughter from the company was intended to convey how lightly they regarded this act of hostility. But without heeding them the lawyer continued: "And as you obviously belong to the Roman Catholic Church, sir. . . ."

In this man Cagliostro at once recognised a power opposed to his own. His practised ear was familiar with such covert declarations of war. He had always loathed thin, dry, sinewy men. Was it not they who always thwarted his most cherished undertakings? He must at all costs keep cool and collected. "If I can be said to belong to one faith rather than another," he replied, "it would be the Mohammedan."

His enemy had not expected this, and his reply only made the astonishment and confusion of the others worse confounded. They turned round eagerly to look at him. The wild red of his wine-flushed face looked like truth itself, illuminating though somewhat mysterious. And now he was yawning with wide open jaws. Only the cleanest conscience and the deepest honesty could yawn in that way, that was certain!

The quantities of heavy wine he had drunk had made him sleepy, and he sat, looking at them all in turn with an expression of mild affability. Every time his eye encountered that of Mr. Reynolds, he smiled broadly. It was perfectly plain that this man knew something. But as he had not opposed the adoption of the new member, he must want to get something out of him, and people who wanted something were always easy to deal with.

The wine was beginning to hum in Cagliostro's ears, so that he almost failed to hear the Venerable Master when the latter enquired of him whether, as a friend of the Grank Turk he

had been able to exercise any influence against the latter's hostile policy towards the Freemasons.

With an expression of infinite good nature, Cagliostro opened his eyes. "No, I never concern myself with politics, because I always see things too clearly in advance. It only leads to unpleasantness when, as a detached scholar, far removed from mundane matters, one calls the attention of the great ones of the earth to their follies."

The greatness which lurked behind this display of modesty was compelling. Blinking rapidly, and already looking quite agitated, the Venerable Master ventured to put a further question. "Whence did you obtain your gift of foresight? Is it due to magic calculations?"

Infinitely simple and hearty was Cagliostro's reply, inspired as it was by a further bowl of crusted old port. "It is the simplest of astrological calculations. The progression of the cusp of the present IX House in conjunction with the secondary directions of the Moon and Jupiter, by which the mundane aspects of the transits among themselves, and in regard to the other cusps of houses, are of the greatest importance. The position of the *pars fortunæ*, in addition, is of decisive significance."

Now these were surely profound glimpses into the mysteries of the East. The Count was certainly no ordinary Count, he was a devil Count, a magician, such as the ancients were familiar with, a thaumaturgist, a cabalist, almost a prophet.

Their enthusiasm rose almost to ecstasy when, with infinite simplicity and apparent lack of mental strain, he described to them the profound knowledge which had been imparted to him at the High School of Arabian Astrology in Medina, as well as in his beloved Trebizond, where he was taught by a dancing Dervish.

The Freemasons had never dreamt of being able to enrol such a novice as this! What a day it was! They muttered to each other in undertones. The Lodge of Perfect Equality had to enter a valuable asset to its credit. Significant glances were

exchanged. Just fancy! And only a novice! In vain did the Treasurer endeavour to calm their excitement. They no longer listened to him. Meanwhile, all Cagliostro did was to yawn. His eyes looked so kindly, so full of friendliness, and yet they all tried to avoid looking into their depths. Their heads were full of him.

Clouds, fragrant clouds of port, bore his spirit aloft, and gently rocked his thoughts. Who knows? Perhaps, after all, he had done the right thing in joining this Society of highly worthy nonentities. For was it not within the bounds of possibility that he might one day be their head? What then? Why, in that case, he would, once and for all, be free from care; for here everything pointed to a state of solid affluence, to the existence of a pleasant *bourgeois* money bag, full to overflowing with sovereigns and ducats. His heavy head became so completely lulled with the thought of gold and its warm glitter, that he failed to hear the well chosen remarks of the Venerable Master, who was explaining to him the objects and constitution of the Order of Freemasons. It was only when the old man began to mention figures that his words caught Cagliostro's ear. The Venerable Master had just begun to discuss the question of support.

The Count turned his mighty head to the speaker. "*Per bacco!*" he said, "I did not know that the Freemasons were beggars, *lazzaroni*, in wealthy England!" So saying, he opened his large dark glowing eyes wide, and fixed them sternly on the old man, who winced beneath his gaze. A flutter ran through the company.

"For a man who possesses the secret of Magistry we are certainly poor," said the Venerable Master, stammering a little. "But generally speaking, one would be justified in regarding our Order as immensely wealthy. Countless millions lie in the iron safes of the Banks of Amsterdam, Paris, Lyons, Frankfort and Genoa, my lord."

A soft and kindly shadow came into the Thunderer's eyes. Nevertheless he shook his head compassionately, as if he were

addressing a child, and with a shrug of his shoulders, said: "Millions? But how have the Freemasons managed to get all that?"

By this time, however, the Venerable Master had grown quite excited. The power and wealth of his Order constituted one of his pet topics. He shouted, and in his agitation his voice almost rose to a squeak. "But reckon it up yourself, Count! One hundred and eighty thousand Freemasons, each contribute five pounds a year, in addition to the seven they pay to their own particular Lodge—that makes nine hundred thousand pounds. Now every one of the twenty thousand Lodges is bound to contribute twenty-five pounds a year on St. John's Day, which makes a further five hundred thousand pounds. In addition there are the registration fees for the new members who join every day, the fees for the diplomas of Masters and Members, the legacies and endowments, *plus* the annual interest on the existing capital. Reckon that all up, Count, and you will find that the figure greatly exceeds two million pounds. Just you figure it out, Count, and you will agree with me that our Order has very considerable means at its disposal."

The Count had apparently listened with interest and had even condescended to nod kindly once or twice. The whole room breathed more freely.

"I acknowledge that, from the standpoint of western conceptions, your figures are imposing, but they are far excelled by the East. Now my friend Pinto, the Grand Master of the Maltese Order, assured me that the Arabian Lodges alone possess three times as much."

Mr. Reynolds turned his dry greenish yellow face to the Count. "Might I enquire, sir," he said, "why you did not join one of the Oriental Lodges?"

The whole company listened with bated breath. Cagliostro, surveying him with dignity, replied: "The Invisible Lord of All required my services at that time for a different purpose."

The lawyer was silent, but a gleam in his eyes seemed to indicate that he would return to the subject when the oppor-

tunity offered. The Count turned graciously towards the Terrible Master, with his display of white teeth. "Two million pounds. H'm! Two million pounds, say you. . . ." He appeared to be thinking it over. Then he continued pompously: "Well, and to what do you apply the money? For it would certainly not go very far."

"To works of charity and altruism," interposed the Venerable Master in shrill tones, as if he were jealous of the Count's attention. "But also to far-reaching schemes, which do not materialise for years and years."

"Two millions . . ." murmured the Count in a far-away voice. "Not much for far-reaching schemes. What schemes, for instance?"

With an air of great mystery the old man whispered the names of Ravailac and Cromwell in his ear, as well as the dates of certain great revolutions. Cagliostro did not move a muscle. "Really! Indeed! Two millions. . . . And who has charge of the money and controls its outlay?"

"The three Grand Masters—that is to say, the Grand Master of the Higher Observance to which we belong, the Grand Master of the Strict Observance, and the Grand Master of the Illuminati. These three together have the right to dispose of the funds of the Order, but, of course, they have to render an account of the money every year to a delegation of the Masters."

"And how does one become a Grand Master?"

The old man grew dumb with astonishment. He had not expected this question, and really hardly knew how to answer it. With a bright smile the Count gazed at him. "It's all right. I know. I know now. You needn't trouble to answer." Then, as if musing to himself, he muttered: "Two millions, and three controllers—what a foolish arrangement!" But nobody could discover from his words what was his cause for complaint.

The Brother who was Orator to the Lodge, now sprang to his feet, in order, as the custom was, to toast the new member.

But the latter seemed to pay no heed to him. Two million pounds a year—was that not very much more than he had expected?

Airy fancies bore him into the secret cellars of the banks in Amsterdam, London and Frankfort. In the misty arms of his imagination he was carried before the three Grand Masters, who hugged the keys of all this treasure. A whirlwind of thoughts whisked him aloft to heavenly heights, far beyond the peak on which the three Grand Masters stood, and showed him the fat form of Giuseppe of Palermo, with the three keys in his hand. . . . The avalanche of his thoughts made him giddy. . . . Two millions! They would make him the very belfry of the world! He would hang above the earth and ring, and whatever he rang, those below would have to ring in unison; for he would be Power, he would call the tune to the Universe. . . .

All of a sudden he started. Surely he had heard a bell ring? A servant came in with a note, which he handed to Mr. Reynolds. But all the latter did was to give a silent nod, and with a glance at Cagliostro, he relegated the note to the breast-pocket of his coat.

There seemed to be something going on in that direction? The Sicilian wrenched himself from his dreams. *Santo porco*. The port was heavy! He ought not to have drunk so much, or so fast. Calmly and graciously he nodded in the direction of the Treasurer. "You look very green, Signor Reynolds. Has the port disagreed with you by any chance?"

"An old trouble in my kidneys, sir," replied the Treasurer with a cough, and turned away.

Cagliostro allowed his glance to wander thoughtfully over the assembled company, and they all shuffled under the metallic hardness of his eyes. Then, turning to the Venerable Master, he droned: "Indeed, indeed! So little revolutions and upheavals are among your aims. Laudable enough, but not in my line. But then I am only an insignificant novice!" The thought made him laugh.

The red-haired Irishman appeared only to have been waiting for this. At the top of his voice he shouted: "Brethren and Master! Contrary to our customary ritual I beg leave to propose that Count Cagliostro be allowed to pass over the rank of member and be admitted this day to stand for the Master's examination."

"Three times three!" roared the company unanimously. The spell was broken. They had a hero. They pressed about him, and clinked glasses with him. Nonchalantly he let them have their way. His eyes sought the Treasurer. But Mr. Reynolds had left the room.

In all humility the Terrible Master approached him. "My lord Count, the examination for the Mastership is my particular province. Are you inclined to undergo it?"

A glance which was well-nigh lustreless and leaden from overmuch liquor met the Master's gaze. With a drawl, Cagliostro replied: "I will gladly afford you this pleasure, but before I do so, I must at all costs be allowed time to collect my thoughts. Kindly show me to a room with a comfortable couch. We, who are the custodians of the profoundest wisdom, are accustomed to collect our thoughts only when we are lying down."

A yawn burst open his huge jaws. The Venerable Master made a sign to a lackey.

When Cagliostro awoke it was already dark. He sneezed loudly. A servant bearing candles entered the room instantly. The fat little man rubbed his eyes. On the table there stood a decanter containing a liquor as clear as crystal. He placed the mouth of it to his lips.

"*Santo porco!*" he growled angrily, and flung the decanter to the floor. Fancy giving him water! He snorted and called for ale. In a trice the footman returned with a jug of the foaming liquor.

"There is a man waiting outside for your Lordship."

"Tell him to go to the Devil!" gurgled Cagliostro, and went on drinking.

"His name is Benito."

The jug was now empty. The drink had refreshed him.

"Benito? Show him in!" The footman vanished—Damned little devil! So he had tracked him down. What a pearl of a boy——

A slight delicate looking youth in ragged clothes tripped into the room. He had raven black hair like his master, but instead of the latter's eyes, his were just two narrow slits, while his lips were thick and bulging like those of a negro, and his chin was conspicuous for its absence. Struck with amazement, he stood stock still. "How very grand it is here, sir!"

"Hold your tongue, you blockhead! Come here!" whispered the Sicilian. Benito shuffled forward. "The walls have ears," his master continued in an undertone. "Look at me!"

The youth lowered his glance and shrank back. "Those eyes," he wailed, "those terrible eyes! Master, tell me what you want me to do, but don't look at me with those eyes!"

"Now listen to what I've got to say. From this moment my name is Count Alessandro Cagliostro." With a look of unutterable slyness, the boy nodded and grinned eagerly. "I am a Colonel on my travels. Do you understand? I am very rich. And you have only become my servant quite recently—that is, if anyone should ask you about me. You don't know anything more."

"All right, sir. But Signora Lorenza has been a little anxious this afternoon, for Signor Scott came."

"*Figlio d'un cane!*" roared Cagliostro, but quickly lowered his voice to a whisper again. "What did he want?"

"The necklace, sir. Signora Lorenza comforted him and said that Signor Balsamo. . . ."

"Ass, I am Count Cagliostro."

"A wonderful name!" chuckled the boy. "We have not had one like that yet. Signora Lorenza—I beg your pardon, Countess Lorenza, told him that the Count was at that very

moment engaged in magic operations with the necklace in connection with certain difficult astrological calculations."

"What a pearl of a woman!" Cagliostro exclaimed, nodding approvingly. But the next instant Benito's expression grew sad. "But afterwards the Countess Lorenza cried a little."

"Silly goose!" hissed Cagliostro angrily. "Hush! Some one is coming!"

He assumed a fitting posture and continued majestically. "Present my greetings to the Countess!"

A man wearing a mask stepped slowly into the room. Benito started and crossed himself anxiously. In unctuous tones Cagliostro continued: "The Countess need have no qualms. Count Cagliostro has never yet shunned any danger. And now be off!"

With a furtive glance of suspicion at the masked man, Benito, making a series of elaborate bows, withdrew. Hardly had the door closed behind him, when the newcomer asked in cold sepulchral tones: "Are you ready?"

"I am always ready," roared the Count.

"Then hand me your sword, let me blindfold your eyes and follow me."

"At your service!" Down clattered the sword among the fragments of the broken decanter. "Blindfold my eyes!" The man in the mask did so. "And now forward march!" roared Cagliostro.

Once more they climbed a flight of stairs, and in a moment or two another flight. They zig-zagged, through passages, and came to more stairs. Frightened by the unfamiliarity of the direction they were taking, Cagliostro for the first time tried to collect his thoughts. Had he been an ass after all? Weren't they burning to know his secrets? So many strange things had been said about the Freemasons! . . . Could they possibly be intending to put him to trial by torture. . . . *Porco, porco!* what a terrible plight he was in!

As this thought struck him, he snatched his hand from that

of his guide, and stopped. "What is the meaning of this long journey?"

"The journey to the grave is even longer," resounded a hollow voice behind the mask.

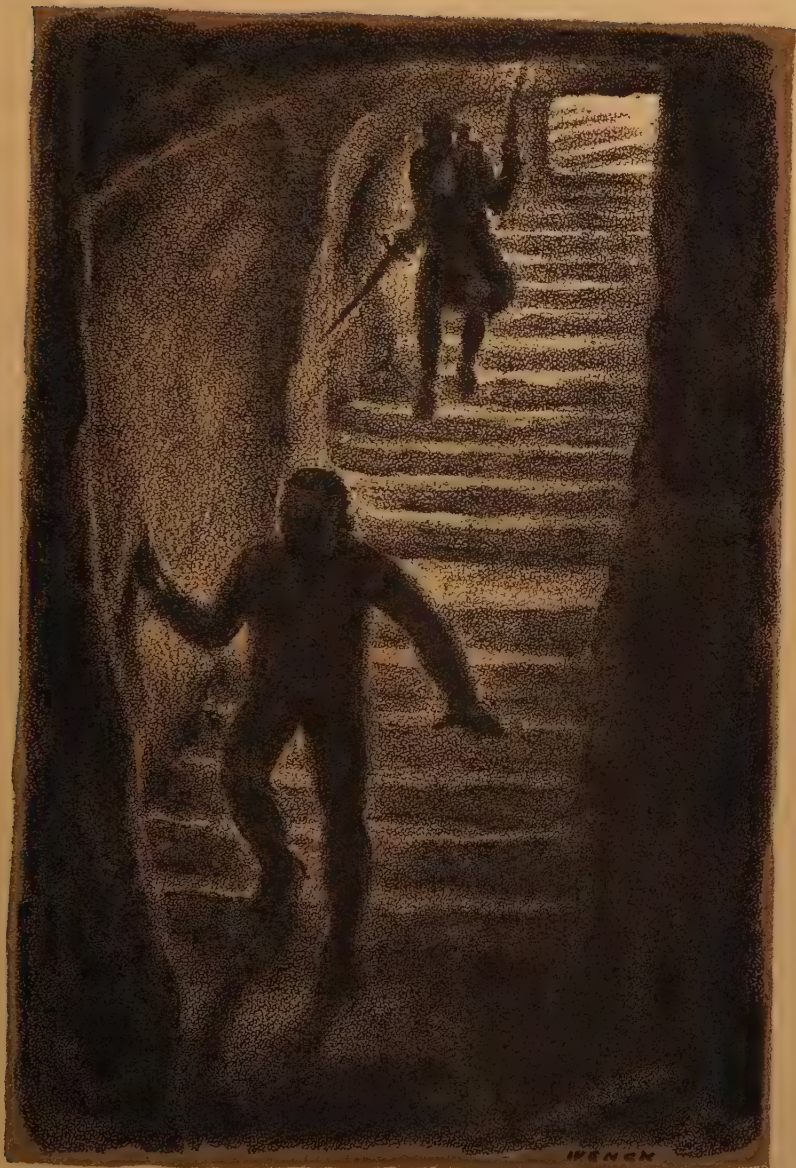
Cagliostro retreated a step and raised a hand to his head in order to remove the bandage. But as he did so he felt a cold sharp point pressing into his bull neck. Someone was standing behind him with a naked sword, and cutting off his retreat. He could have cried over his own stupidity! He had fallen into a trap. It was certainly the work of that damned lawyer. His heart was in his mouth. But had he been in any better plight in Palermo with that idiot Marano? And yet he had survived it. True he had been almost flayed alive; but he had escaped.

The sword point on his neck became more painful.

"Gadzooks!" he puffed himself out like a turkey-cock. "Surely you will allow a man of my figure to recover his breath a bit after climbing up and down all those stairs!"

But they allowed him to do no such thing. He was obliged to go on, and as he did so it grew hotter and hotter. The sweat oozed from every pore, great drops of it fell from his nose. The air was like that in a baker's oven, and the floor was red hot. This he knew by the soles of his shoes, particularly the right one which had a hole in it. And the confounded heat grew more and more intense at every step. He kept raising his hand to wipe the sweat from his face with his coat sleeve. Cool, he must get cool, otherwise he would most surely die!

And lo! he did get cool at last, much cooler, much more terribly cool than he had wished. Up to this moment every step he had taken had been controlled by the hand of his guide, and this hand continued to lead him into ever more stifling heat. Suddenly, however, the hand was pulled away; he stood still, and a push from behind sent him sprawling into ice-cold water. The Sicilian literally squeaked. He had never been in water before in his life. Uncontrollable panic seized



Porco! Porco! WHAT A TERRIBLE PLIGHT HE WAS IN!

hold of him. He struggled and shrieked for help; sank, rose to the surface again, struggled and shrieked again, until his hands at last caught hold of something solid.

He found that it was a parapet only a trifle higher than the surface of the water, and he tried to raise himself on to it. It was a difficult feat because the stone was smooth. After he had fallen back into the water half a dozen times, however, he at last succeeded in getting out. He shook himself like a dog, and a torrent of Sicilian curses poured from his lips. From the sound of his voice he gathered he must be in a vaulted chamber. But his first thought was to get away from the neighbourhood of the water. After the fiery heat of a moment ago, this icy bath would most certainly give him a cold. His wet underclothing stuck to his skin with nauseating clamminess. He must at all costs get away. He groped about him. The vault was a narrow ascending passage. He groped his way along it, and continued to do so for an hour, a day—he did not know. He had lost all sense of time and space. Step by step he dragged himself wearily along, feeling the while as if his head must burst, as the wretched bandage about his eyes was pressing so tightly round it. This bandage was so taut and so ingeniously tied, that in spite of all his efforts, he was unable to loosen it. But he must go on at all costs. He must come to an end some time.

Suddenly his foot stepped into space. And when he tried to throw himself backwards, so as to fall on solid ground, that too slipped away from beneath his feet. Flinging up his arms, he hurtled into the void. As luck would have it, however, the fingers of one hand, which he had opened wide in terror, managed to seize a thick cable, which seemed to be hanging in the air. Quickly he laid hold of it with the other hand as well, and thus he hung all alone at a dizzy height above the earth. So utterly wretched was he, that he was on the point of crying. Oh, how he regretted now that he was so fat! Oh, how he deplored his sins! Oh, how he prayed to the Madonna and all the blessed saints whose names he was so fond of taking in

vain! Now the time had come, he knew it, when he must die. He could not possibly endure this for long. He was too heavy for his own arms. The skin on his fingers as they clung to the coarse cable, was already blistering and peeling, and burned like hell. At last his own weight became intolerable. He could stand it no longer. He groaned aloud. "Santa Maria!"—he was falling into space.

But how strange! He was not falling at all! Hardly an inch below his struggling toes, which all this time had been seeking in vain for solid earth, there must have lain the soft surface on which he was now standing. Feeling with his feet, he found he was on a small circular eminence. Once again he grew giddy. Was it not possible that, throughout the interminable journey, he had been climbing to some great height, and was now about to crash into unfathomable depths? He tried to fall on his knees in order to find out, if he could, what his isle of refuge consisted of. But in an instant a terrible voice thundered bewilderingly close to his ears.

"Stand up!"

Like a derelict voiceless bell, he had been suspended between heaven and earth, and now he had been struck by that sledge-hammer blow. He quivered in every muscle. He was no longer a human being, but a wretched bell, hanging in solitary space. What else could he do, now that the sledge hammer blow had fallen, but ring out his lamentations once more, and drop into space? This he proceeded to do. With a loud roar, he jumped, as if he were springing into an abyss, and hurled himself in the direction of the terrible voice. But his spring landed him in no abyss, for with a terrific shock, his feet almost immediately struck against a stone floor. The little round islet on which he had been standing could only have been an inch or two, at most, above the level of the ground.

A hollow voice, which struck him as strangely familiar, sounded in his ear. "What a courageous feat!" Oh beloved Terrible Master! With a sudden effort of his senses, Cagliostro convinced himself that he was not alone in the room.

Instantly he adopted a pose. True, he was still panting, and his voice was a trifle shaky. But he succeeded, nevertheless, in uttering the following words in a more or less seemly manner: "Some fresh clothes please. These I have on are wet. I don't want to catch cold!"

The thin voice of the Venerable Master rejoined officiously: "Yes, in a moment, Count. The proofs of your courage have so far convinced us that we are prepared to let you off the remainder of the tests, except one."

Proudly the Sicilian appealed to the old man: "Then pray make haste! Count Cagliostro fears but one thing in the world, and that is a cold in the head."

He could hear a murmur of admiration run through the room. But now another voice was raised, a cold relentless voice. It was the voice of Reynolds, the voice of his enemy. Pressing a pistol into Cagliostro's hand, he commanded him to load it.

Cagliostro was no lover of pistols; but what was the good? If he did not do it they would only compel him to do something worse. As his eyes were blindfolded, he was obliged, when he had put in the powder, to lay down the pistol and search for a bullet.

"And now put the muzzle to your temple and pull the trigger."

Oh how frigidly his enemy uttered the words! Cagliostro felt the cold sweat run from every pore, and his knees seemed to have grown soft as wax.

"Do you hesitate?" continued the imperturbable voice of his enemy, and in it the nasal twang of gentle mockery was already apparent. "A true Freemason must have courage."

Cagliostro blustered and stormed. "Have I lived these two thousand eight hundred years to end my days through a fickle bullet? I must consult the superior powers, the great invisible masters, before I decide. Don't interrupt me again."

Silence now regained about him. He felt that, despite the wishes and machinations of his enemy, he was acquiring a hold

over them once more. So he stood before them muttering to himself, and reflecting deeply. Flight? That was quite impracticable. Press the trigger? That might mean death. But, after all, what purpose could his death serve them? Alive he would be much more useful to them. There could be no doubt that all they wanted was to test him.

Resolutely he set the muzzle to his temple. "The invisible powers have informed me," he said, "that the shot will not be fatal, as they need my life. *Helion! Melion! Tetragrammaton!*"

He pressed the trigger. A deafening report rang through the room. A smell of burnt powder followed. Cagliostro staggered.

"Three cheers for Cagliostro!" and the voices of the company thundered through the hall. The Freemasons were delighted. Cagliostro had not only shown courage, but he had also uttered a true prophesy. For he could not have known that when he laid the pistol down to search for a bullet, another weapon had been put in its place.

The Terrible Master uttered an ear-splitting yell. "Greeting to the new Master of the Royal Art, His Highness Count Alessandro Cagliostro! Long may he live!"

The whole company joined in. And for the first time since his ordeal the fat little man was obliged to grin to himself. At last he had landed safely on the solid ground of fact.

Some one tore the bandage from his eyes. The room shone like a gigantic firework. Every available light had been kindled. Cagliostro stepped forward, grave and collected. Not a cheer was heard. Silently the naked swords of the Masons formed a glittering pergola, under which he was expected to walk. The pergola led to the foot of the throne, the empty seat of the Venerable Master. Without a moment's hesitation Cagliostro sat himself upon it.

"Unity, Silence and Virtue!" bellowed the Brother Orator.

"Money! Money! and ever more money!" were the words that re-echoed in the breast of the newly appointed Master.

Pale and dignified he sat there, as he took the final oath. It was the same great hall in which they had assembled in the morning. So many candles were burning that his eyes gave him great pain. Moreover the tight bandage had given him a headache. But no matter! All he had to do now was to puff himself out in true Sicilian style. Everything about him seemed to swell. His eyes bulged violently, his nostrils performed an exotic dance, his lips pouted defiantly—and, oh God! as for his famous iron chin, it projected like a promontory into the room, demanding and provoking terror.

Nevertheless, he was still shaking all over with cold, and at last the Venerable Master noticed it. "Fresh clothes for his Lordship!" he cried to one of the Brethren.

Cagliostro rose to his feet. His masterful glance sought the face of his enemy. By the bright gleam in his eyes, he knew that Reynolds' plan was still making headway. But he only shrugged his shoulders. What did he care about the lawyer now?

A junior Brother led him upstairs into the room in which he had slept. It was just as he had left it—the crumpled couch had not been touched, and the fragments of the glass decanter were still lying in their pool of water.

"How long did the examination last?"

"Half an hour, your Lordship."

Ten o'clock had already struck, but it was only when Benito uttered the word "Police!" that his lordship deigned to open his eyes.

"Already?" he growled sleepily. "I take off my hat to Mr. Reynolds!" In his nightshirt and with his hair all dishevelled, he looked like a great over-fed schoolboy. Benito glanced shyly at him. "Money, sir!" he added. "I must go and buy a few things."

Full of honest grief, Cagliostro thought of the last two guineas and a few odd shillings, which he had dropped into the hand

of the servant at the Lodge on the previous day. "I have no money," he groaned. "What do the police want?"

"They are coming about the necklace," Benito replied cheerfully. "But I hardly think they'll get it." And he laughed quietly as if to himself. Cagliostro had to laugh too, and dropping a leg out of bed, he thrust it familiarly towards his servant.

The youth ran to the window, drew back the curtain, and then sidled out of the room. A grey depressing light filtered through a thick mist into the poorly furnished bedroom. On the table scraps of paper covered with cabalistic signs were strewn about. Cagliostro's tongue was as thick as the London fog. "I drank too much yesterday," he observed.

He got up and waddled over to the window on his bare feet. Reluctantly he gazed through the panes. It was not a very bright day on which to be taken into custody. He had already known on the previous day what Reynolds was up to, and he had not changed his mind. He retreated a step or two, pulled off his nightshirt and looked about for his dressing-gown. Reynolds—a cunning rascal. . . . It was almost worth while to have an enemy like him. He could not help thinking of the gipsy. She had told him that he would have many enemies; but she had said other things too, and these other things. . . .

Benito came back. His master installed himself in one of the chairs, and the excellent youth began to get busy with the Sicilian's blue-black cheeks. This was the hour for confidences. Before taking his daily plunge into the fusty life of civilisation, Cagliostro liked to have a little early morning chat with a confidant. And was not Benito a sort of confidant? He had picked him up four years previously in Naples. Happening to be there for a short and brilliant adventure, he had found the artful little urchin half starved on the quays, earning a precarious livelihood by waiting for the arrival of ships and carrying travellers' luggage to the various hotels for a few *soldi*. He there and then appointed him his body servant and valet.

Ever since that day Benito for better or worse had shared his fate, standing at his side during lean weeks, enjoying exciting spells, and always joining in his eternal hunt for money. From time to time there came periods of dazzling success, when wages were raised to brilliant heights. Benito liked this life, and, true son of Naples that he was, he idolized his crafty lord and master, who was always light of heart. Aye, his idolisation was only equalled by his fear of him.

As soon as he began to lather his master's face, he pricked up his ears to hear what the great man might choose to reveal to him that morning. For although Benito's eyes were wholly concentrated on the shaving brush and the skin it touched, he seemed to have a third eye with which he studied every expression on the face of his master.

At last the latter's lips moved. "It is always advisable to be shaved when one is going to be taken into custody." Taken aback, Benito stopped his lathering, and stared at his master. There were no police there, and yet his master knew he would be taken into custody—oh, he must certainly have done something marvellous. Cagliostro yawned. "Those were excellent people yesterday, Benito, very rich people, I can tell you; two millions pounds a year. If only we had that, my lad!"

Benito nodded eagerly. But it was a mere song for such a man as his master.

"There is only one fly in the ointment," Cagliostro continued, the corners of his mouth twitching. "The road to the money lies through jail."

Whereupon he burst out laughing. Benito dropped the razor, and resting his hands on his hips, did likewise. They understood each other.

With the jerk of the chin characteristic of him, Cagliostro suddenly stopped laughing. And Benito stopped as suddenly, and then eagerly went on shaving.

"They're infernally quick, these English police. I've never seen anything like it in other countries," Cagliostro grunted.

"*Caro Mæstro*, but no police have been here at all. . . ."

"You knave! You'll make your way yet." The Sicilian doubled up with laughter. "That's just what I should have done, *santo porco*, when I was your age, and was apprentice to the apothecary at the Benfratelli. They didn't get much fun from my society, the dear old brothers! At that time I was a young rogue like yourself. I, the high born Count Cagliostro, and Master of the terrible Order of Freemasons, had not a penny in my pocket. That's what people call making one's way—what?" And he laughed silently and gasped for breath. Benito immediately let the razor drop, and laughing noiselessly also gasped for breath enthusiastically.

No very elaborate toilet was made. This was not Cagliostro's strong point. Snorting and hurriedly diving into his clothes, he told mad tales about the power of the Order, and Benito opened his mouth wide and blinked with an affectation of great gravity. Suddenly Cagliostro lowered his voice, and looking anxiously at his servant, exclaimed: "And what is Signora Lorenza doing?"

Looking just as anxious as his master, the boy replied, "Oh dear, oh dear, Madonna Lorenza is not well to-day. She got up early with a headache, went for a short walk with Padrone, and is now lying on the couch in the drawing-room."

In a trice the Sicilian's animated face was filled with deep furrows. "Look at me, Benito!"

The boy grew pale, and holding his hand before his face, as if he wanted to protect it, he stammered helplessly: "Sir, oh sir, I'm frightened."

An unctuous warmth entered Cagliostro's eyes, and his features became distraught, as though he were under the influence of a mysterious power. His voice sounded monotonous, and there was a note of cruelty in it. "Look at me, young man. I command you to do so!"

Terrified out of his life, and huddled together, Benito stood trembling and looking up with the expression of a frightened young animal, into the maddening eyes that looked him through and through.

"We shan't be too hard on you to-day. You needn't go to sleep, all you need do is to listen and do as you are told. Now attend! You know the thing in question, which we buried in Hyde Park—well, to-night you will go and dig it up. Then you will carefully remove the stones from their setting—you know how to do that, don't you?—place them in a bag, and hide the bag so that no one can possibly find it. Then to-morrow you will sell the gold so that, in case my plan fails, which is most improbable, we shall have a little money to get away to Holland within a week's time at the latest."

The boy nodded convulsively after each of his master's words, and, in order to prevent his eyes from closing, as they felt inclined to do, he opened them as wide as he possibly could. Then, in his anxiety to please, he repeated the last words: "get away to Holland within a week's time at the latest."

Quickly Cagliostro went on chanting: "You will make secret enquiries about the ships that are due to sail there."

"——about the ships that are due to sail there." Benito was already half asleep.

"When the police come you will hide yourself under the bed in here and watch and see what happens to the silver casket and the red leather book. Then you will come to the King's Bench and report everything to me. Keep your eyes open and your mouth shut."

"Keep my eyes open and my mouth shut!" mumbled the youth.

"Swear!"

Suddenly Benito's eyes seemed to bulge out of his head. Assuming a grotesque attitude, he raised an arm, and laying his other hand on his heart, stared dumbly at his master for a moment. Then in a flash, shrieking so loudly that his voice rose into another key, he cried: "*Helion! Melion! Tetragrammaton!*" Whereupon he closed his eyes and staggered back.

Even the muscles of Cagliostro's face suddenly relaxed and he passed his hand over the boy's face. Benito, sinking all of a heap, dropped into a chair, breathed deeply once or

twice, almost with a groan, and then opened his eyes. Looking about him, he seemed bewildered. When his eyes met his master's he grew pale.

The Sicilian smiled furtively, whereupon Benito was obliged to laugh in his crafty way, and the two proceeded to pack the little piece of soap, the razor and the dressing-gown in an old trunk, so that they would be ready for all emergencies.

"Let the Countess know that I am coming to her!" With a grin the master gave the youth a playful slap. The boy waddled out with great gravity.

Lorenza was beautiful. She was not only beautiful, she was also lovable. She was very young, and although a woman, seemed a mere child. The rich mellow blue of her large eyes was deepened by the shadow of her long black lashes. Her delicate, finely pencilled eyebrows were also black, and formed a strangely fascinating contrast to the warm gold of her hair. Her brow was high, cool and smooth. Her lips burned an ardent red amid the marble whiteness of her skin and were as calm as if they knew nothing of life. She was graceful and slim, was the fair Lorenza; sweetly did her breast rise and fall as she breathed, and her childish shoulders were touchingly slight. Yes, she was beautiful, very beautiful, was Lorenza Feliciani, the fair little Roman girl, who for seven years now had been Giuseppe Balsamo's wife, and who wandered backwards and forwards all over Europe at his side.

Calm, gentle and pure was the gaze of her large blue eyes, as they peered out of the wild and vicious confusion into which fat Giuseppe, perspiring with his lust for money, and panting with jealousy, had always led her. Duels would take place, when she allowed her face to be seen; for wherever she appeared, she aroused the passions of men. Nevertheless, neither lust for gold, nor untruthfulness, nor even generosity or tenderness, had ever succeeded in setting her young, unguarded and almost lonely heart aflame.

Benito threw open the door, and thrust his rogue's face into

the room. "Madonna! *il conte di Cagliostro!*" he announced in a loud voice. Padrone sprang up and barked.

Lorenza was lying on the couch. Her friend, Padrone, had been sleeping at her feet. He was a small, brown spaniel with white patches, large intelligent eyes, long hanging ears, and a soft, thick, silky coat. He was as distinguished and gentle as his mistress, and his eyes had the same calm, reserved expression.

The day was grey and overcast, and Lorenza was full of melancholy. Alas! it was going to be full of alarms again—imprisonments, humiliations, and, in the end, flight under cover of the fog. Her life was no easy one.

Old Feliciani, a smelter of copper in the *estrate dei Pellegrini* in Rome, had only agreed with a heavy heart to give his daughter, then still a child, in marriage to the young man, whose acquaintance she had made by chance at the Neapolitan fortune-teller's. The young Sicilian had struck the old smelter as being altogether too flighty, although he was full of big boasts. He was then making a precarious livelihood by means of pen drawings and engravings; but old Feliciani soon realised that his productions were quite mediocre. How then did the Sicilian manage to make a living?

When the old procuress presented herself to the smelter, as a sort of go-between, she explained to him that his future son-in-law had in his horoscope the Sun in the House of Fame, and, incidentally, would always fall on his feet. In the eleventh House, however, which was the House of Friends there was Venus in conjunction with Mercury, and that was extraordinarily good; *Santa Madonna!* it meant heaps of money, any amount of money, through women, good luck and shrewd judgment! the old witch snorted into his beard. But she never breathed a word about the fact that in the House of Enemies and Prisons, Saturn, Jupiter and Mars stood in menacing proximity, aye in almost fatal conjunction.

She likewise refrained from telling him that the child Lor-

enza was no longer an innocent maiden of sixteen but had already lain in Balsamo's arms.

And thus it came about that on a hot April day in the year 1769 Lorenza Feliciani became the wife of the apothecary's truant apprentice, who now, as it chanced, happened also to be an engraver. As for Giuseppe, he was well aware of what he was doing. Lorenza would be sure to become a beauty of European fame, and such a woman was a splendid asset. After many failures, in which he had squandered both his own gifts and the asset in question, he had learnt to manage his affairs more prudently. True, she had once allowed herself to be lured by the charming Monsieur Duplessis, and had run away from him. But without any hesitation he had had her sent to prison for a short time, and a little while afterwards magnanimously welcomed her back again. Ever since that day, however, he had been cautious. He no longer sent her off into mesmeric trances, and all he asked of her was to "make eyes" at the psychological moment. But he only expected her to do this to others, not to himself, for he attached but small importance to such things. As the years passed by, he grew to be ever more and more contented merely with the sensations which he experienced in the act of mesmerising. Nevertheless he was as unaccountable and as jealous as every southerner. The thought that his wife might one day fall in love would drive him mad.

But the fair Lorenza was also cool—cool and reserved. Or was she merely foolish and faithful, pious and thoughtless? Was she perhaps only a child whose blood still flowed along solitarily like some hidden stream? And what would happen if one fine day she awoke from her long dream?

Sadly she lay on the couch. Who was it that Benito had announced?—A Count?

Heavy footsteps approached the door. With his chin in the air and his brow as hard as iron, her husband entered the room. Nevertheless, he did not look quite as self-assured as he would fain have done—not half so self-assured. Padrone barked

again. The Sicilian cowed him, and, with a surly growl, he crept under his mistress's couch.

Lorenza opened her eyes and gave him a friendly smile. "Good morning, Giuseppe. Aren't you feeling well that you have slept so long?"

Cagliostro's expression was full of mystery. "We are drawing near to the realisation of my greatest dreams. Ever since yesterday you have been the spouse of Count Alessandro Cagliostro."

"Cagliostro?" Lorenza enquired with a faint smile.

"Count Cagliostro," the iron chin repeated in confirmation. "I have adopted the name of my late lamented uncle of La Noava. It is true he was not a Count, but on the other hand he was *major domo* to the Prince of Villafranca. In the end it would have been impossible for me to associate the name of Balsamo with the grandiose plans I have in view."

Lorenza's smile was still sweet, even if it was a trifle amused. "And what will your relatives in Messina say?"

Cagliostro waved a deprecating hand. "The good old bell-founders! Oh they will never know that Fate has cast a cosmic bell out of their name. Lorenza, ever since yesterday I have been a very great man."

The fair Roman girl raised herself on one elbow and gazed at the speaker with a friendly though incredulous smile. "But how often haven't you said that before, Giuseppe?" Padrone also got up, stretched himself, and looked reproachfully at his master with his intelligent eyes.

Cagliostro sat down. "Maybe, Lorenza, that on previous occasions I have made boasts that were too proud. But this time I am telling you nothing but the truth. Look here!" He took various papers and objects from his pocket. "These are diplomas and insignia of office, which have been given to me by the greatest power on earth, the Order of Freemasons. Yesterday I was promoted to the rank of Master of the Lodge of Higher Observance."

Lorenza covered her face with her hands. "Oh, Giuseppe, why, why? Now we are for ever cut off from the Church!"

Precisely what that insufferable old moralist, Althotas, had said, thought Cagliostro. He was clearly somewhat upset by the remark, but he controlled himself and rejoined coldly, "Signora, you are behaving in a manner unworthy of your high-minded spouse. Ever since yesterday I have seen my great goal clearly marked out before me. I shall become the Supreme Grand Master of the Freemasons, and reconcile that Order with the Church."

Lorenza laughed, with her eyes still full of tears. "Really, will you really do that, my darling boy?"

Cagliostro kept a grave face. "Not only that, I shall also spend the two million pounds per annum on the Countess di Cagliostro and myself, and will not let a farthing of it escape my fingers for other purposes. My word of honour! Besides which I am going to prison to-day."

Pale as death, Lorenza sprang to her feet. "Going to prison? But why don't we run away?"

Cagliostro smiled proudly. "That's the triumph of my wisdom. Yes, I am going to prison. Does that upset you? But I know perfectly well what I expect to achieve by this means. They will set me free immediately! It is the only way of escaping from this abominable shortage of money. And in any case I should not have been able to stop here much longer. But ever since yesterday I have been Master of the Freemasons, and the world seems to be full of wealthy Masons. We shall be in Holland in a week's time at the very latest."

Lorenza was pale and terribly serious. "In prison. . . . Nothing but shame and humiliation."

Drunk with delight, Cagliostro crowed, "And Phœnix, more radiant than ever before, rises from the dust and ashes!"

Benito crept anxiously into the room. "They have really come this time, sir!"

Outside, the knocker was thundering on the oak of the front door.

The King's Bench, the Debtors' Prison, consisted of a vast court or square, enclosed by a high wall, and surrounded by a number of mean-looking houses. The few trees to be found there were still bare, and the open space was filled with troops of peevish-looking, shabbily-dressed men, who were strolling up and down, some of them reading newspapers, others talking to one another or to themselves. The liveliest entertainment the prisoners had was either to look into the shop windows of the tailors and shoemakers, who had also been imprisoned for debt, to stand still and chat, or to sit about and gape in the coffee-shops kept by bankrupt caterers. It was a depressing and melancholy spectacle, particularly on this grey and foggy March day, which, in spite of the mildness of the weather, was so damp, that it induced an involuntary shiver.

Cagliostro had been driven to the Debtors' Prison by a police inspector in a cab. On the way he had chatted agreeably with the officer, and had very soon succeeded in convincing the stalwart but simple-minded fellow that Mr. Reynolds was a low schemer. The direct consequence of this new friendship was that the reception formalities were quickly despatched, after which the Count's important person was handed over to an extremely good-natured but not very intelligent looking turnkey, who was to see that his lordship should be given the accommodation befitting his rank. The police inspector took the turnkey aside and described the gentleman's splendid qualities—another result of the Sicilian's affability. When, on the point of leaving, the inspector gave a military salute, and clicked his heels smartly together, Cagliostro held out a friendly hand. Almost beside himself with agitation, the police officer stammered as he pressed the exalted fingers so graciously extended: "Everything possible will be done . . . a knavish trick . . . I can well understand. . . . I hope you will be well looked after, otherwise they'll have me to deal with. . . ." So saying, he frowned darkly at the turnkey. The latter protested volubly that he would allow his lordship to want for nothing, even if his lordship were to ask for the moon in the sky, French claret,

or a fifth for a round of poker. Deeply moved, the inspector turned to go, choking with anger at the lawyer's villainy.

Full of good cheer, Cagliostro followed the turnkey. He was in high spirits. He loved prisons. Never having succeeded in finding a place in the whole world which would offer him the hospitality of a home, he felt at ease in prison. Prison seemed to be his real home. In these surroundings everything immediately looked familiar. He was always well treated in prison. He had been conscious of this every time he had entered one of the many prisons which he had come to know in the course of his life. For, no matter how different the various countries were, or how bitter or jolly life in them might be, their prisons had always offered the same comforting security. They were the one steady and immovable pillar standing peacefully amid the torrent of events; in them alone was the safety of the maternal hearth to be found, which everywhere welcomed a son with the same warmth and kindness.

The turnkey gave Cagliostro a large bright room which was furnished much more comfortably than the room the debtor had only just left. Delighted, the Sicilian examined his new abode, looked to see whether the bed were soft and warm, moved the table so that he could get a better light, changed the position of the pictures, and altered the arrangement of the chairs—and in a trice the room looked quite attractive. The turnkey enthusiastically lent him a hand. Yes, by Jove, his prisoner must be a very great gentleman, since he understood so well how to conjure pleasant surroundings out of nothing! At last his lordship dropped into the armchair by the fireplace, where the turnkey had lighted a nice fire of beech blocks.

“What are your lordship's orders?”

“First of all, my dear friend, I wish you would be so good as to tell me what I am to call you.”

Somewhat embarrassed the turnkey blew his nose in his hand. “My name is John Winter. . . .”

“Well, then, please Mr. Winter. . . .”

The turnkey immediately interrupted him. "Oh, please not that, your lordship! Not Mister, and not Winter, but plain John. I should be so grateful if you would kindly leave it at that."

"Oh, charming nation!" thought Cagliostro, and nodded approvingly. "All right, John. Well, some time towards evening a certain Reynolds will call to settle the cost of my keep here. Will you tell the rascal that it is all arranged for, and fling him out? Do you understand? He must be told to come back to-morrow morning, and not too early either."

The turnkey nodded darkly. "I'll see to that, sir."

Cagliostro gave him a pleasant smile, and twisted his cheerful bull-dog face into an expression of noble graciousness. "And just one thing more. Owing to an unfortunate concatenation of circumstances, I haven't a penny in my pocket. But in spite of that I wish to enjoy my usual comforts. Can you manage to see to that for me, my son?"

The turnkey acquiesced with alacrity. "Just give your orders, my lord—anything you like."

"You are a good fellow, John, and you will have your reward."

"I didn't mean it that way, sir, but only because it really do break my 'eart to see such a fine kind gentleman brought into this 'ere awful plight through some low down trick. But just let 'im wait a bit, the old rascal, I'll learn 'im, when 'e comes and shows 'is face in 'ere." And he threatened an imaginary Mr. Reynolds with a fist tanned by tobacco snuff. "And now for your orders, your Highness! Would you like oysters? A mutton chop? Plum pudding? And perhaps a few bottles of old French claret as well?"

Cagliostro smacked his lips loudly in anticipation of all these good things. "Splendid, John! And then we shall settle ourselves comfortably on either side of the fire and drink a bottle of the claret, and perhaps another bottle. . . ."

"Oh, 'ow my Betsy will grin when I tell 'er all this. And with such a fine gentleman too! . . ."

When the meal was over, Cagliostro, satiated and indescribably content, settled himself in the armchair by the fire. True he had been obliged to use a great deal of persuasion before he could induce John Winter to move an ordinary chair up to the chimney place and sit down in it. But after a while he had succeeded, and they were soon drinking old French claret together. Cagliostro poured forth the most glowing account of his three thousand years of life. He spoke of his magnificence and exalted origin, of the Cabala and the fixation of mercury. He spoke of his friend Pinto, the Grand Master in Malta, to whom his teacher, the infinitely wise oriental Althotas, had taken him. And he spoke of the huge hidden cities of Central Africa, each of which was ten times as large as London, the mother of cities. He spoke of his wife, the angelic Princess of Santa Croce, and, finally, of his high rank as Grand Master of the powerful Order of Freemasons. Wider and wider did John Winter stretch his mouth and open his eyes, and his wonder and astonishment were such that he even forgot to take a pinch of snuff.

"Your Highness mentioned the Masons. I had one of them here once."

"What was his name?" Cagliostro enquired nonchalantly.

"George Cofton, your 'ighness. A kind and gentle man. In the end 'e died 'ere."

"Really?" Cagliostro yawned. In his enthusiasm John Winter did not notice the yawn, but continued his yarn as if nothing had happened. "Yes, 'e died 'ere. 'E 'ad been in the snow and ice of Russia, to try to introduce Freemasonry there; bukt 'e 'ad no luck. The old Muscovite, 'e soon got 'im by the collar, and chucked 'im into the darkest dungeons. That gave poor Cofton the pip, and after the wicked Tsar 'ad set 'im free and 'e came to us, 'e was already not quite right in 'is 'ead. Now and then 'e could sometimes talk sense though, and then 'e told me 'e 'ad made a great discovery which would turn all that Freemasons' stuff upside down, and that 'e 'imself would

be the greatest man on earth, like the Pope is with the Roman Catholics."

In a moment the Sicilian's deep-set eyes, which a minute before had drooped drowsily, flashed with excitement. He stared at the turnkey.

"What sort of discovery was it, my dear John?"

"Ah, you 'ave me there, your 'Ighness. I'm afraid I can't answer that; I understand precious little about it. 'E called it the System of the . . . now, what was it of? It was something in Asia; 'pon my soul I can't 'elp thinking you've mentioned it yourself. . . ."

"Egypt?" The Sicilian's question was almost a scream.

"That's it, 'The System of Egyptian Freemasonry.' 'E said it was as old as the 'ills, and 'e was the first 'oo 'ad dug it up again. But I've quite forgotten what it really was."

Cagliostro gasped for breath. "Quick, John, drink, and think hard."

The turnkey rose. "But we can look for ourselves," he said. "'E wrote it all down, and it's lying in the attic of the door-keeper's lodge, in the same basket with the other few belongings that the poor gentleman left behind 'im after 'e 'ad passed away in the Lord. If you'll allow me, sir, I'll go and fetch the writings." And so saying he hurried out of the room.

Cagliostro sprang to his feet. He seemed to be swelling all over. This was indeed a day of days! Egyptian Freemasonry! What had the Venerable Master said? Oh yes—if ever we should succeed in recovering the forgotten mysteries of Egyptian Freemasonry, we should hold the whole world in the hollow of our hand! And lo! Oh blessed John Winter, oh glorious George Cofton! He drank glass after glass of Bordeaux and reeled to and fro in breathless expectation of the inheritance on which he was about to enter.

When the turnkey came back Cagliostro almost wrenched the thick volume out of his hands. He lost no time in reading it, turning it over, and reading further. He could not understand a syllable. The letters danced before his eyes. But it

was genuine enough. His heart beat like mad. It was genuine enough! Oh Universe! Giuseppe's hour had come! The hour of thy resurrection has struck, George Cofton—aye, it has struck my great Coft.

"Will you allow me to keep this, John?"

"If it will please your 'Ighness."

Oh, for a little air, air! so as to be able to think clearly once more, and collect all the dreams that swarmed and rioted in his brain! Air! So great was Cagliostro's enthusiasm that it was like a hand on his throat strangling him.

There was a knock at the door. A cold voice outside was heard to say: "Is Balsamo in here?" With the faithful eyes of a dog, Winter glanced at the Sicilian, who nodded. Whereupon John Winter went gravely to the door. "What do you want?"

"I wish to speak to Balsamo," came the reply in Mr. Reynolds' voice. "He was taken into custody on my instructions."

"Oh, and so you are the scurvy knave!"

"Damned insolence to speak to me like that! You ruffian! I am a lawyer!"

But how different, malevolent and rough John Winter's voice could be if he chose! "What? Insult an officer on duty! Go to the devil you low-down lawyer you!"

"I must have a word with Balsamo at once; I have come to set him free."

"His 'Ighness is very comfortable 'ere, and doesn't wish to have any truck with bloody scoundrels. Come back to-morrow morning, but not too early."

The lawyer now shrieked in his fury. "Fellow, you are overstepping your authority. I shall report you!"

John Winter laughed a harsh laugh, pulled himself up to his height, and stepped out. "I'll show you, my friend!" The lawyer retreated, but John Winter did not let him off lightly.

Meanwhile, what was happening to Cagliostro? He simply paced to and fro, constantly to and fro, as if what was happen-

ing outside did not concern him in the least. The unexpected rainbow glory of his good fortune pressed so heavily on his throat that suddenly he could no longer contain himself. It had to come out. And Cagliostro began to sing. Otherwise his heart would have burst, his larynx would have choked him, and his brain would have exploded. Cagliostro sang. His lips curved themselves into bows, and ever wilder and wilder noises proceeded from them. The bubbling fullness within him, the turbulence of his senses, compelled him to sing. Cagliostro sang. He sang dissolute litanies and harp-ditties of his native pot-houses, the gallant canzonets and chants of his childhood days, the ballads of his most edifying pranks. Cagliostro sang, wildly and all out of tune. And he was unspeakably happy.

He dropped the book. He could not understand a word of it now in any case. And in Holland he would have leisure enough for study.

John Winter, who was somewhat flushed when he returned, had already heard the harsh blaring voice of his illustrious guest in the distance, and was delighted. Cagliostro embraced him. Whereupon they both had a drink. They were mightily fond of each other, these two. Then they had another little drink. And thus the hours sped by.

Just look at him, dear reader, sitting there, the fat little man, perspiring with wine and enthusiasm, his face a bluish-red and all oily. Behold him surrounded by an admiring circle of prison warders, drinking and shuffling the cards. Spicy remarks fill the tobacco-laden air, for it is the hour of pipe-smoking. Bottle follows bottle, with an empty ring, on to the flags outside. They are playing poker and bawling songs the while. And in the intervals between their bawlings the drunken wizard tells them of his deeds of derring do. Oh, behold him, dear reader, as he sits there, and see how at midnight, when top-heavy, he rolls blissfully on the floor, he is gently undressed and put to bed, as if he were a child, by the coarse and hefty men about him.

Just as good Betsy, the honour of honest John Winter's household, with a sad shake of her head, had swept up the heap of broken glass which had accumulated overnight beneath his bibulous Highness's windows, she beheld limping towards her a thin man clad in black, who seemed to be suffering from some liver complaint. His left eye was encircled with a reddish blue ring that looked distinctly unpleasant, and, before he knocked at the door which led to his lordship, who was having breakfast, he looked about him for a moment or two with evident anxiety.

"Mr. Balsamo, I have come to set you free."

Cagliostro flung the manuscript of the aforementioned Cofton, who had died in the Lord, into the middle of his richly-spread breakfast table, and roared: "Am I never going to see the end of these eternal interruptions?"

Never would the lawyer have dreamt that such a thing could be possible. His voice sounded rusty. "Shall we draw a thick red line through the past, Count?" he asked.

Something had certainly gone wrong, thought the lawyer in bewilderment, for the Sicilian's reply was truly alarming.

"So you have not been able to read the magic work, is that it?" he cried. And he laughed like the very devil.

But how could he know that? Was he after all in very truth a wizard? Stammering in his agitation the lawyer hastened to explain. "In consequence of the disappearance of the necklace, I found myself compelled to have your place of residence searched, Count. And while they were thus engaged the police came across a strange red-leather book, together with a silver box containing an unknown drug. These articles were handed over to me by the police officers."

"You did not search my house at all. Both the book and the casket were stolen by Scott in your presence, Mr. Prevaricator!" And the hateful iron chin seemed to project even more and more relentlessly towards the lawyer. "You tried to decipher the work and found it was in Arabic. Whereupon you marched off with it to an oriental scholar, and he told you that it was certainly written in Arabic characters, but that he could not make

head or tail of it. But don't go to any further trouble. I fancy it is a secret script the system of which I alone can understand. And as to the powder, I warn you. Take the wrong dose of it, and your life would not be worth a moment's purchase."

The unfortunate green and jaundiced man of law could only lisp in reply: "Could we not by any chance come to an understanding?" When the Sicilian thoughtfully growled his reply, his words rang like music in his ears. "And am I to make the secret script of the magic work accessible to you and instruct you in the use of the powder? Are you acting on the orders of the Lodge?"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"Well, I will consent to do so on certain conditions."

"Your conditions are accepted in advance," gasped the lawyer.

"Well, you will have to pay the turnkey, John Winter, twenty guineas at once, for my sojourn in the King's Bench. Furthermore, and no later than to-day, you will hand me one thousand guineas, so that I may devote myself entirely to the work and remain undisturbed. And as soon as I deliver the magic work to you deciphered, and it is approved by the Order, I am to receive in settlement of my claims for handing over such priceless secrets, the sum of one hundred million pounds."

In spite of the fantastic magnitude of the sum of one hundred million pounds the lawyer did not even take time to reflect. Suddenly he had become all sweetness, and with girlish gentleness, he replied: "Everything, everything, we gladly accept all your conditions, Count, provided that while you are working at the manuscript, it may remain in our hands, and that you will make a declaration to the following effect—that the little misunderstanding which occurred in regard to the seizing of the book and the casket arose out of a friendly agreement."

"Oh, there is nothing I should have liked better than to send you to Newgate, you jailbird. However, I will spare the Freemasons of whom I am now Master, the shame of such an exposure!"

"The Order thanks you heartily for your consideration," rejoined the lawyer in honeyed tones.

Cagliostro threw open the window. "Will you come in, John Winter!"

The gigantic shadow of the turnkey fell like a threat across the room. Never was pocket-book withdrawn from pocket more slowly than Mr. Reynolds' was now, but the irresistibly glowing eyes of the Sicilian enticed the bank notes out of it notwithstanding. John Winter kissed his lordship's hand and left overjoyed, after he had taken care to enquire whether his lordship would not like him to break one or two of the pettifogging lawyer's ribs. . . . But Cagliostro in affable tones merely held out hopes for a future occasion.

The Sicilian stared at the lawyer fiercely for some time, and Mr. Reynolds almost doubled up. "I shall expect the money punctually at eight o'clock this evening at my lodgings."

The lawyer bowed with an air of infinite humility. "Certainly, Master!"

Hardly had Mr. Reynolds closed the door behind him than he doffed his mask. One hundred millions! he thought. Thy covetousness itself has brought thee under the knife. And now we have thee in our pocket!

And what about Cagliostro?

Smiling broadly, he flung himself on the bed, and the neatly-drawn Arabic characters in the leather-bound volume performed a lively quadrille before his closed eyes. Their meaning? He knew their meaning well enough.

Lorenza, fair Lorenza, was sitting at the window. Oh what a grey London day! Oh what an eternity of worry, falsehood, debt and imprisonment! Oh what a life!

Padrone, who had been asleep in the corner, sat up, stretched himself and ran slowly up to her. She stroked his silk coat, and he rested his little muzzle, still warm with sleep on her hand.

"Padrone, Padrone. Once more we are alone! Giuseppe is in prison."

Padrone licked her hand. "You are my friend, Padrone." She felt an infinitely comforting warmth, an infinitely faint warmth, radiating from her little dog, and she gazed desperately at him. "What will become of us, Padrone?"

He gave a little wag of his tail. She knew that what he meant to say was, that things were not quite as bad as all that, and that he and she would always stick to one another.

Suddenly Giuseppe's eyes stared compellingly at her, and she felt a soft drowsy warmth creep over her. She knew that he must be speaking to her from a distance, as he had often done before. Half conscious, she saw him standing, as it were in the flesh before her in the room, and yet he was not there. He mumbled something to her, swinging his arms rapidly the while: "Don't worry any longer. This evening I shall be home again. And to-morrow we shall go to Holland like rich people. Don't worry any more. We shall not have to run away, but shall go away happily like well-to-do people. Call Benito. He will tell you all about it."

She sat up. Giuseppe's shadow had gone. Padrone still cuddled up to her side, and seemed to be trembling a little. She pressed him to her. "Padrone! You and I will stick together."

She called Benito.

The boy shuffled in with a broad grin on his face. Yes, it was quite true. He had seen the master in the King's Bench that morning, and he seemed to be the object of almost princely veneration. And there was a ship sailing for Amsterdam on the following morning. As for money, the Master had plenty of that!

St. Petersburg

THE Empress was gazing thoughtfully out across the blue waters of the lake, the glassy surface of which was gently ruffled by the early morning breeze. A flock of white swans plunged out of the reeds and sailed majestically into the middle of the lake. The lime trees rustled.

Whenever Catherine stayed at her palace of Tsarskoye Selo, it was her custom to get up very early. Accompanied by her little white dog, which was of some English breed, with her night cap still on her deep golden hair, and dressed in a white morning frock over which she wore a woollen jacket, she used to take a walk in the park.

She had not had a good night. The mighty Empress of all the Russias, who had once been only a petty German princess, could not accustom herself to the feverish brightness of the short northern nights. Her blood coursed uneasily through her veins. For three whole days *he* had not been seen in Tsarskoye Selo, and she knew only too well how frivolous and dissolute he was. Always these interminable affairs with women! There had been too many of them, seeing that he was known as the Empress's lover. Her temperament was such that she was accustomed to take these matters lightly. Nevertheless he might at least have shown himself, instead of coolly keeping out of the way.

She sat down on one of the marble seats on the bank of the lake. The little dog nestled up to her. Mr. Rogerson, her physician in ordinary, drew near.

"Quiet Schutka!" and her voice sounded disappointed. "Well, and what brings our Aesculapius to us so early?"

The tall thin Englishman made a deep bow. "Merely concern about the state of your Majesty's health. It is generally known that at this time of year, when the nights are shortening, your Majesty usually has bad nights." She gave him a scornful glance from her bright blue eyes. "How thoughtful of you! We are hardly accustomed to that sort of thing from you, Rogerson."

The Englishman bowed low in confusion, and stammered helplessly, "Your Majesty! . . ."

A determined wave of Catherine's hand interrupted him. Boredom was making her round rosy face appear slightly drawn. "No circumlocutions, Rogerson! You know I don't like them. Whom have you come to complain about now?" She rose as she pronounced these words and walked towards the castle. The gaunt medical man followed faithfully behind. "As your Majesty has guessed what my business is, I may as well tell you without further ado that a certain mysterious person has settled down in the city, and is doing the doctors of St. Petersburg a good deal of harm. He is a Spanish Colonel, who poses as a doctor, and treats people for nothing. They are flocking to him in shoals."

"Naturally! But what has that got to do with me? Am I to force him to charge high fees? I shouldn't dream of such a thing." Catherine's look was cold, and her voice dry. Her unfortunate medical attendant could hardly keep pace with her. For although she was of medium height and somewhat plump, this woman, who was still beautiful, could walk very quickly. With some embarrassment, he replied: "I feel certain that this Spaniard is only doing this by way of a start, so as to take our patients away from us. Later he will certainly adopt a different line in *puncto salaribus*. But in the meantime our waiting-rooms are left alarmingly empty. Your Majesty, the doctors of St. Petersburg are on the verge of starvation."

The Empress kicked a little stone aside with her foot. "Be-

fore this the quacks used to make quite a lot of money. So now all they can do is to pull their belts in a little tighter. Starvation? Don't exaggerate so, Rogerson!" Hastily the doctor replied: "Your Majesty, the state of affairs is precisely as I have ventured to describe it to you. While not a single soul shows his face in our waiting-rooms, hundreds of people besiege the Hôtel de l'Europe every day—in fact the police have had to intervene in order to regulate the crowds; for Count Cagliostro. . . ."

"What's his name, did you say? Cagliostro? Surely I have heard that name before?" Meanwhile the couple had reached the castle, in front of which a handsome equipage had drawn up.

A very tall, well-built man hurried towards the Empress. His movements were quick and determined, his countenance open but imperious. His clothes were of almost foppish elegance, and yet the very movement of his hand, as he adjusted the ruffle round his neck, and every line of his face, betrayed the soldier and the man of great authority. Boldly he threw back his head, shaking his fine dark locks. His chin and nose were large but well formed and full of determination. His lofty brow was smooth and finely arched. A faint smile in the corners of his proudly arched lips, and the dark glance of his large flashing grey eyes exercised a silent but irresistible spell.

"Did your Majesty summon me?"

"You are a stranger nowadays, Grigorij Alexandrowitsch!" Catherine exclaimed, her scoffing tone suddenly changing to tenderness. "But maybe you are right, my dear Adjutant-General."

Potjomkin made no reply, but merely imprinted a long kiss on her small white hand.

Rogerson remained bent in a stiff almost exaggerated bow. With a careless nod of her head the Empress dismissed him. "Very well, I shall have the matter looked into." With long strides like a stork, the doctor withdrew.

The Empress looked up, and her eyes were full of kindly warmth. "Now Grigorij, what have you to confess to me this

time?" With a self-conscious smile, His Serene Highness, as everyone called him, stroked his silken moustache. "Full of contrition, I report myself for duty, your Majesty. There is only one woman in the world. The sky of St. Petersburg is pale and low like the canopy of a bed, but that of Tsarskoye is like the sun itself, eternally large and bright."

Catherine shook her head, and gazing at him once more, saw that his eyes were half closed and full of memories. "Come with me, Sir Gad-About, it is high time for the Empress to get dressed." Then she laughed aloud, and going close up to him, pinched his ear. "Grischa, you great schoolboy, you are always the same old madcap!"

An hour later, her Majesty now dressed and with her hair curled, repaired to her study, followed by His Serene Highness, in order to turn her attention to matters of State. But before she deigned to listen to a word from her ministers, she playfully hurled a question, in the presence of one of them, at her all-powerful favourite, as though it were a bright bouncing feather ball. "Grigorij, have you heard of Count Cagliostro?"

Glancing up with a twinkle in his eyes, Potjomkin replied that he had. "Rogerson," the Empress continued, "is complaining about him, and says that he is taking away all the patients from the doctors of St. Petersburg. Is he really nothing but a charlatan?" The prince laughed heartily. "Just as much a charlatan as the rest of them, no more and no less. Except that he has the advantage of being a Count. They also say that he not only treats his patients for nothing, but that he gives them medicine, clothes and even money. On the other hand, all the members of the better classes whose curiosity drives them to his consulting room, are quickly sent to the right about. At the present moment he is the favourite topic of conversation throughout the city."

"Perhaps," interposed the Empress thoughtfully, "he is a Mason of the new school?" Potjomkin yawned and shrugged his shoulders. "Possibly! I do not know. I am having him watched. I have also told Stroganow that *coûte que coûte*

he must contrive some means of gaining admission to the rooms of this strange and saintly creature."

Catherine ran her finger over the surface of the table. "According to the latest reports from the secret service, the Freemasons are busy with revolutionary schemes. The man may be dangerous. Why don't you go to him yourself, Prince?"

For the second time Potjomkin yawned. "That's just what I want Stroganow to arrange. But it will serve no purpose unless Cagliostro is ignorant of who I am." With a glance of infinite tenderness and beauty, the Empress extended a hand to him. "Bravo Grigorij! You are certainly the only brain among my advisers."

The minister who was present with his report turned pale. Potjomkin gently pressed her small hand. Catherine closed her eyes and smiled.

Dressed in gorgeous livery, with a dignified expression on his face, and the picture of gravity, a small slightly-built attendant, whose eyes were no more than two narrow slits, shuffled through the packed waiting-room, and halted before a door covered with black velvet, over which the Hebrew word ADONAI was printed in gold letters, gravely knocked first five times, then three times, and finally once. Whereupon nimbly opening the mysterious door, he glided so quickly into the adjoining room, that not one of the heads that were craning to look could get a glimpse of what lay on the other side.

Cagliostro had already made himself quite at home. His room looked like an apothecary's shop. Rows of spacious shelves covered the walls, and upon them, standing neatly side by side, were innumerable white porcelain jars bearing mystic devices. To judge from the skull and crossbones which figured so frequently upon them, many of them appeared to contain poisons. On the table, on the other hand, in gorgeous disarray, stood a medley of retorts, flasks, phials, alembics, and crystal vessels of every possible shape and size; while on a chair lay a long black gown together with a huge broad-brimmed black hat,

which seemed to belong to it. With admirable fidelity the room reproduced down to the smallest detail every feature already familiar in the magic apothecary's equipment, and was identical in every way with those which this great mystery drugmonger had already installed in every town he had visited.

Nevertheless, he had in the meantime learned much. He now knew much more, very much more about the dark and uncanny power which had enabled him even in the early days, by means of a few strokes of his hands, to send people off into a state strangely resembling sleep. He had already practised this art secretly in Palermo, after he had lighted upon it quite accidentally. All unwillingly Lorenza had been the best subject on whom he could practise and perfect himself in the art. During his recent wanderings, however, he had found himself drawn by the lust of fame to Vienna, where he had attended a demonstration of Doctor Mesmer's magnetic experiments. Many things connected with the mysterious power he possessed now became clear to him. His power was greater than Mesmer's, for, almost without help from outside agencies, he could succeed in doing to individuals what Mesmer could only do to a number of people when they were touching each other and thus forming a chain which produced a magnetic current. But that was not all; for truth to tell, he achieved much more—his mediums, under the spell of his will, could almost perform miracles. But this was still a great secret, the revelation of which promised to be exceedingly lucrative. The hour for this revelation had yet to come.

Short and fat as ever, as if the years had left no mark upon him, Cagliostro was sitting comfortably in an armchair, wrapped in a dressing-gown richly trimmed with fur, a present from the aristocracy of Mitau, drinking chocolate and reading the paper.

The Neapolitan boy still stood awkwardly at the door. He no longer understood his master. The Count's present behaviour was quite incomprehensible to him. Hitherto he had been in a position to understand and admire everything—but what was now going on lay beyond the horizon of Naples. The

best people were turned away, but to the mob the door stood ever open. They had their pulses felt, they were given medicines, tonic wines, clothes and money, not if you please by way of a loan, or at interest, or in exchange for security, but for nothing, for a thank-you, as if they were presents, scraps flung to a dog!

Moreover, ever since they had been in St. Petersburg—a matter of about five weeks—he had remained reserved, mysterious and impenetrable. It was enough to make you cry with anguish. He did not even look up when Benito, bubbling over with news, entered the room. He listened in silence, without seeming to pay the slightest heed, administered no more clouts, no longer hissed or snorted, and had turned into a sort of dumb, mysterious heavy cloud.

A hoarse sound made Benito start with fright. The Master had sprung to his feet and his expression was angry. He crumpled the paper up, threw it on the floor, and asked sharply: "Many patients?" Eagerly Benito stammered, "The same as usual, Eccelenza, hundreds and hundreds." Still more sharply the Master enquired: "What is the Countess doing?" Benito did not know, so he gave the same reply as he did every morning. "Owing to the damnable light the Countess has not been able to sleep, and she is lying on the couch with a bad headache."

In half an hour, when his master had shaved and dressed, Benito threw the black velvet doors smartly open, and Cagliostro stepped into the waiting room. He wore a black velvet coat, a bottle-green jabot and white breeches, while innumerable rings sparkled on his fingers. His florid cheeks presented a sharp contrast to his white wig, which terminated in a short loose pig-tail. The sheath of his sword glittered with countless small brilliants.

All those present pressed forward to greet their benefactor. With a sort of fierce affability he saw them one by one, feeling each visitor's pulse, exchanging a word with everyone, looking them steadily in the eye, and handing them a printed card on which was to be found, either the name of the drug they were

to take, which they could obtain free of charge at the nearest apothecary's, or the figures representing the sum of money they were entitled to call for in the afternoon. Only a few were taken by Benito, at Cagliostro's bidding, into the magic closet where they were more thoroughly examined.

Whilst Cagliostro was looking at all these patients in turn, he suddenly espied a tall thin man in uniform, whose features were both vigorous and attractive. With a look of calm superiority he was contemplating the strange and edifying spectacle, for all the poor of St. Petersburg seemed to be thronging to the Spanish Doctor Colonel. His look was not that which Cagliostro was accustomed to see in the better class people who came to him merely out of curiosity. In the young officer's eyes there was an expression of cold scrutiny and courteous restraint which betokened power. At last Cagliostro reached him. With a military bow, the stranger asked in an undertone: "May I beg you to grant me a private interview, Colonel?"

Cagliostro was on the point of declining, when the visitor made a secret sign which proved him to be a Freemason of the rank of Master. The Sicilian's heart was in his mouth. At last the spell was broken! They had found their way to him, the proud St. Peterburg Freemasons. With a surly sidelong glance and an angry nod, he consented to see the stranger in private, and the officer was conducted into the magic closet.

Four hours later, at about two o'clock, Benito announced to the assembled crowd that his master was feeling tired and begged all those whom he had not yet seen to excuse him for that day, and to present themselves at his room again on the following morning. A sigh of disappointment ran through the hall and they all made a dash towards the velvet doors. It was only after great difficulty and with the assistance of the police that the hall was cleared.

With heavy steps Cagliostro was striding up and down his magic closet. His stern eyes rested for a moment on the officer who, feeling bored, had taken up his stand at the window, and was contemplating the animated scene in the street below. A

wild gleam entered the Sicilian's eyes and his lips parted in a thick muffled laugh. But he turned his eyes quickly away, and attended to a patient whom Benito had just conducted to the room.

At the end of half an hour this patient also was disposed of, and the only people now left waiting for the doctor's advice were a mother and her pale little daughter who suffered from fits.

Cagliostro turned to the officer, and in a harsh domineering tone, said, "Look sir! if you will kindly turn round, you will see something which you have never seen on earth before."

He made a sign to the mother, and she brought her daughter in. Cagliostro laid his right hand on the little girl's head, and stroked her straw-coloured hair quickly and excitedly. He seemed to squint horribly as he did so, and his mouth went all awry. The little girl trembled.

Thereupon Cagliostro took a small crystal flask from his pocket and opened it. A faint and pleasant fragrance filled the air. He poured one or two drops of the perfume on his hand, and rubbed them into the child's forehead. In a moment she was covered with perspiration, but the Sicilian too had already begun to pant. Suddenly he collapsed, his eyes grew dim, and his features seemed to shrivel up. He almost pushed the little girl to the wall and tumbled into a chair.

"Bring me a large flask of fresh water!" Benito dashed out to fulfil the order. The officer watched the mysterious proceeding in utter bewilderment. The mother was silently praying.

Cagliostro's vocal chords creaked as though they were made of wood. He made the little girl stare steadily into the flask of water, behind which he had placed three lighted candles, and then laid his left hand on her head and pressed it gently. With his other hand he described strange signs and magic characters in the air, and then stamped his right foot three times on the floor. The child stared steadily into the brightly shining water, as she had been told to do, and was soon overcome by a warm and comfortable feeling of drowsiness. Her eyes seemed determined to close, and again and again she made an effort to

keep them open, while her little body had suddenly grown so light, that she hardly felt it was there. Secretly her fingers groped to make sure, but she could not feel her body at all. All she was conscious of was a sense of wonderful brightness and well-being, and the touch of the fat little man's hand, which at first had been so terrifying, and which she now felt she liked more and more every minute. At last her eyes closed.

After a few minutes breathless silence, Cagliostro raised his voice, and though gentle he spoke in a tone of command. But strange to say, he seemed entitled to command!

"What do you see?"

"I see a great building. Oh! it is a palace, and in it I see a tall, stout lady with rich fair hair and a little white dog. She is laughing and talking with a very tall handsome man in a magnificent uniform. Oh, what beautiful dark hair he has, what dazzling orders he wears; he is certainly a great general!"

"What are the two discussing?"

"'Grischa,' she is saying, 'have you been to the Spaniard yet? Be careful, he is said to have a very pretty wife.' And now he is looking into her eyes, and is laughing and kissing her hand. Oh!" And the child heaved a sigh.

Cagliostro's stern and lowering eyes were riveted on the officer, who had suddenly turned very pale. He had understood.

"Enough!" The Sicilian gently stroked the little girl's brow. "You won't have any more pain now, and you won't have any more fits. Wake up!"

The child opened her eyes, cast a bewildered glance round the room and staggered. The mother crossed herself. Cagliostro caught the child in his arms; she immediately began to cry, and as if he were putting her to bed, he laid her on the couch. She was comforted at once, but while she still whimpered to herself, she pressed her nose to the Sicilian's hand and smelt it. It was still fragrant with the perfume with which he had anointed her forehead.

A few minutes later, amid hearty protestations of gratitude, the mother and daughter somewhat timidly withdrew. Cag-

liostro dropped into an armchair, and invited the officer to take a seat. The fat little man did not seem to be in the least bit disturbed by the fact that the exhalations of his many unwashed patients had left the little room full of unpleasant odours, or that the tables were covered with little phials containing specimens of their water etc. He did not even wash his hands, but calmly used them as they were to wipe the perspiration from his brow. It made the young officer shudder. Cagliostro noticed it and exclaimed scornfully, "Do you imagine, young man, that the saints and prophets used to wash themselves when poverty stood knocking at their door for help?"

The officer looked at him in confusion. What was this remarkable man—a saint or only a great reader of the human heart? At all events, he had just said things which would have pleased certain exalted personages immensely. Nevertheless, he made up his mind not to give a full and faithful account of the episode with the little girl, for certain exalted personages could be most unaccountable at times. Cagliostro's eyes seemed to be sucking at his very soul. Suddenly he thought in alarm that he was expected to answer the Spaniard's question, and with some embarrassment he stammered: "Yes, but in those days, Count . . . in those days, things were different. . . ." He stopped.

"Pooh!" Cagliostro said contemptuously, and his iron chin was thrust imperiously forward, "what do you know about those days, young man? And what can I do for you? My time is limited." Calmly the officer replied: "Your presence has been reported to us, Count Cagliostro." The bull-dog face looked compassionately at him. "What an honour! I certainly did not know till now that it was necessary for Cagliostro's presence to be reported anywhere." The officer did not seem to heed this open challenge, but continued courteously and with faint embarrassment, "The St. Petersburg Lodges are awaiting a visit from you."

Suddenly he was silent, and the Sicilian was also silent. Once or twice the officer made a further attempt to speak, but the

stern leaden gaze of his companion forced the words back into his throat. He felt that the fat little man's gaze was gradually mastering him. With a last effort of will, he rose to his feet. "One of us will have the honour of calling upon you this evening, Count Cagliostro." He forced these words almost mechanically from his lips.

"And his name?"

"He begged to be allowed to tell you his name himself."

"I knew it. He may come at nine o'clock." With a curt stern nod the Count turned away, and stamped noisily out of the room. Feeling very much confused—aye, almost as if he had received a blow on the head—the officer left the room uneasily. Benito, however, who until that moment had looked somewhat sulky, followed him, his face beaming, and without allowing him to see that there was someone at his heels. But even if he had known, the sight of the reeling Russian mujik behind him, with his fair reddish beard, would have conveyed nothing to the St. Petersburg Chief of Police, and that meant a good deal.

Once again Madonna Lorenza had waited for her husband in vain. Benito came skipping in and announced that His Eccellenza would not be able to come back to lunch, but that he was going to receive an exalted visitor that evening and begged the Countess to be ready about ten o'clock.

The lonely midday meal was quickly dispatched. It would have been dispatched even more quickly if Padrone had not. . . . But Padrone had to be fed as well! And it was so amusing to see him sitting up on his haunches, like a little bear, begging for his food. He looked so trustfully up at his mistress, and the way he stretched out his forepaws was so pathetic. The game had only one disadvantage—it made one feel all the more lonely afterwards.

Lorenza did not like the north.

The thousand guineas obtained in London had soon been spent. They had lasted barely a twelvemonth, and then the old manner of life had begun again. The Hague, Venice, Vienna

—what times of bitter privation, full of prosecutions and humiliations! Afterwards there had followed weeks and months of sham splendour, which had certainly grown more and more brilliant every day, for Giuseppe had become proud and extravagant. Ever since he had joined the Freemasons in London, four years previously, he had even seemed to play a certain part in the life of the world, and Lorenza had been able to gather from his majestic utterances that he was preparing to present humanity with something quite special. Oh, if only it would all end well!

With wide open eyes, she stared into the gathering twilight outside, until her eyes almost filled with tears. What was the meaning of it all? Why? Couldn't they have brought themselves a small property in southern Italy? Then they would have been their own masters. Lorenza might perhaps have had a child, and Padrone would have been able to play with it. . . . They could have had jolly times at the corn and wine harvests, and have led a happy and modest existence in the glorious sunshine on the shores of the Mediterranean. . . .

Instead of that they had come north. Things had been tolerable enough in Berlin and Leipsic, but the moment she had drawn closer to Königsberg, the white winding sheet of the northern winter had pressed ever more heavily on the Roman girl's heart. How sad, cold and monotonous the white was! And yet they had gone every further and further north. At last they had halted in Mitau. It was in Mitau that Giuseppe had for the first time come forward with his Egyptian system of Freemasonry, and with great pomp and ceremony had founded a Lodge there. All the nobility of Courland had idolized him. Things had gone so far indeed that one or two fanatics had actually hinted that they were dissatisfied with their reigning duke, and would much prefer to see a genius like Count Cagliostro, richly endowed as he was, upon the throne of their country. But this was not to be, for Cagliostro chanced to meet a young woman of extremely good family who almost lost her reason for love of fat Giuseppe—Lorenza could not help

smiling, for what a hysterical romantic she was, this Baroness Elisa von der Recke! And so they had to go further north, lured on by hopes of gaining access to the Semiramis of the North, who with her beauty, wit and charm graced the throne of the mighty Empire. Her favourites . . . oh, what did people not whisper about the meteoric careers of her favourites!

Did Giuseppe wish to become Catherine's lover? She did not know. What indeed did she know about her husband, who every year seemed to her to grow more mysterious, more uncanny? They so seldom talked to each other. Was he really her husband any longer? She could not suppress a sigh. Padrone raised his head and looked enquiringly at her.

Recently she had fallen a prey to fresh anxieties. Giuseppe had suddenly developed a dark and mysterious power—what if it came from the devil? Lorenza crossed herself. True, he had long ago possessed the gift of sending people off into a sort of sleep, when he extracted information from them which they would never have volunteered in their waking hours. And had he not frequently succeeded in appearing in person before her and speaking to her, when all the while he was really miles away? . . . But of late he had made use of young and innocent children, whom he bewitched and then by his magic compelled to answer all sorts of questions. But every time he did this, he showed signs of extraordinary agitation which almost . . . Oh, Heavens! Surely he was not a monster like that horrible Gilles de Rais, about whom they had told her in Paris! If he were a man like that, oh Santa Madonna, then she would certainly be cast into the deepest pit of hell along with him.

Her fears drove her from the window. Outside the twilight was falling. If only she could pray! Or go to church! It was no good! The churches of this strange land, with its unfamiliar creed, did not appeal to her. What a horrible country it was, with its summer nights that never grew dark, which were in fact not nights at all, but pale phantoms full of feverish dreams!

Tortured by anxiety and devoured by fear, Lorenza at last

decided that, for the sake of something to do, she would change her dress for the evening. Giuseppe expected an exalted visitor. Very well, he would be satisfied!

She required no maid. In the twinkling of an eye she was standing ready before her mirror. Her dress was of turquoise-blue velvet with a waist like that of a wasp. It was divided in front and revealed an underskirt of silk, trimmed with three rows of embroidery. A blue ribbon of the same colour as her dress was woven into her soft golden hair. Her small feet were encased in shoes of pale blue satin with very high heels. The only ornaments she possessed were her eyes of sapphire blue, the gold of her hair, her ruby lips, and the smooth ivory of her skin.

When she beheld the picture of her beauty in the mirror she could not help blushing and wondering who the exalted visitor could be.

The day went by. The clock struck nine, and then half past—but no one appeared. Cagliostro had had a most excellent dinner and was in the best of spirits. Far north and close to the pole as St. Petersburg undoubtedly lay, the Russians nevertheless had very tasty dishes, one must give them credit for that—wonderful fish, Beluga, Ssig, Ossetrina. They made one's mouth water! But best of all were the crusty little hot rolls and butter with coarse grey caviare! And oh, the Russian jams!

Meanwhile, drunk with sleep, Benito sat twiddling his thumbs in a corner, digesting his dinner and with feelings of growing content, surveyed his master. He liked him as he was. They were on the eve of a most important and decisive event, and yet his master plied the Burgundy industriously nevertheless and lay on a soft couch.

There was a knock. A porter announced a visitor. With a yawn the Count cried "In the magic closet!" and turned his attention to the third bottle. "But the other great gentleman

says he has already hired a room. . . ." Cagliostro emptied his glass and roared: "If he won't go into the magic closet, he can go to hell, and now *basta!*"

The newcomer evidently did not expect such a welcome. Laughing with vexation, he stood in the magic apothecary's shop and contemplated its contents. He was of Herculean build; his face was bold and handsome, and his dark locks encircled a lofty brow. His clothes, which were of the most fashionable cut, consisted of a levee coat of steel grey, a coffee-coloured jabot with a very little extremely fine lace, closed right up to the neck, pale blue silk shoes with dark blue satin braid, heavy white silk stockings of a peculiarly soft sheen and an elegant sword.

Cagliostro refrained from giving his visitor his hand, but greeting him with a cold and silent bow, curtly asked him to be seated, and himself sat down with an air of bored greatness. Much amused, the stranger took a seat and proceeding cheerfully to examine the little man who was covered with jewels and was at least head and shoulders shorter than himself, he opened the conversation in a deep and infinitely sympathetic voice. "And so here I am, Count Cagliostro. And now let me see whether we cannot become better acquainted. But first let me ask you a question—why do you pose as a doctor?"

He was met by a look so full of humour, craft and superiority that anyone else would have been afraid. With studied indifference, but taking care to emphasise every syllable, Cagliostro replied: "Surely your Serene Highness can understand that!"

"Then you know who I am?" interposed the visitor in astonishment. "I do know. You are the man who I was informed was a Freemason, and who nevertheless is not and never was a Freemason. You are the man who is trying to find out all about me, and who, as I now see, will be of use to me—a man who comes to me in civilian garb and who nevertheless holds the highest military rank in the Empire—in a word, you are Prince Potjomkin." He spoke quite calmly and then rang a

bell. "Benito! Champagne for his Serene Highness, and raw gherkins to eat." Benito vanished.

Potjomkin laughed heartily. "Bravo! You are my man! You know my name and my habits! Splendid! I have no wish to know how you get your knowledge; suffice it that it should be so; it says something for you, Cagliostro. And now tell me with the same candor what it is you want in St. Petersburg."

Laughing, Cagliostro fell back in his chair. "That too you ought to be able to understand, your Serene Highness—you of all men!"

Potjomkin produced his diamond studded snuff box, took a pinch, and then observed thoughtfully: "If it is all above board, then I agree. I can thoroughly appreciate all rapid advancement. You may perhaps remember that seventeen years ago—in the year 1762, and at about this season too, we had a somewhat sudden change of government. I shall never forget that 9th of July. I was then only a junior officer in the Life Guards. My regiment helped our present ruler to seize the throne. By accident her eye caught mine. On the following day I was a Colonel and Gentleman of the Bedchamber, in spite of the fact that I was only thirty-three years of age. And to-day I am a prince, and Field Marshal—what you will. Truth to tell, I can fully appreciate meteoric careers. But," he added cheerfully, "it must be by fair means."

Potjomkin reached out for a glass of champagne, toasted his host, and drank it down. Cagliostro laughed heartily. "I entirely agree with you, your Highness—by fair means. Benito, tell her ladyship that she may come down if she cares to. His Serene Highness has been here for half an hour and our business is over."

A moment later Lorenza entered the room, beautiful and graceful, a charming dream picture. Taken by surprise, Potjomkin sprang to his feet, his eyes riveted on Lorenza, who blushed deeply under his gaze. Then he gave Cagliostro a friendly tap on the shoulder. "Now, my friend, I understand

you; if this is your wife—then I agree that you are certainly working by fair means.”

And he kissed her trembling little hand reverently.

A week later, on the anniversary of the accession to the throne of Her Majesty the Empress, autocrat of all the Russias, a splendid court ball was held. From every corner of the compass sightseers flocked to the Winter Palace, to get a glimpse of the state coaches and to admire the people who drove up in them. Even Benito was there, carefully taking stock of everything for his absent master.

It was a cheerful, wealthy and beautifully-dressed crowd that filled the magnificent rooms of the Winter Palace on this occasion. In the large ballroom they danced the polka and the minuet. The Empress watched the proceedings from the door of the small drawing-room, and beside her stood her Adjutant-General, Prince Potjomkin. With a few gracious words Her Majesty had just taken leave of the Chief of the Police of St. Petersburg, and now turned with a smile to her favourite. “Grigorij, I cannot understand why you should conceal such interesting news from me. You seem to forget that I am not only your sovereign but also a very ordinary woman who is naturally inquisitive.” So saying she tapped him playfully with her fan. He blushed and drew close up to her. “Are you referring to my visit?” Catherine laughed, a deep attractive laugh. “Your visit to the magician, sir. You have guessed aright. As early as yesterday morning I heard that you, my Adjutant General, had stayed from ten o’clock on Thursday evening until half-past one on Friday morning in Colonel Cagliostro’s rooms in the Hôtel de l’Europe. Now what have you to say to that? You are always inveighing against the police for their stupidity—surely this time you must admit they have done brilliant work!” And after a short pause she added gently: “Grischa, why don’t you trust me?”

He looked up bewildered, and closing her eyes, she turned her head away. In a trice his old compelling smile had re-

turned. "The man interests me very much, but I just wanted to know a little more about him, so as to be able to give your Majesty a full and exhaustive report."

"I did not know until now that Potjomkin required more than three hours to know any one. This Cagliostro must be a very peculiar bird." The Empress spoke with a trace of mockery, and the Prince's eyes flashed in response. "That's just what he is, your Majesty! I don't believe half of what he tells me. But he amuses me. He is one of the most interesting men in this tiresome world. His system of moral and physical regeneration is remarkable."

The corners of the Empress's mouth drooped. "Physical regeneration? In other words—belief in miracles, charlatanry! Since when has Prince Potjomkin been in need of that!"

Shrugging his shoulders and looking at her with a superior air, he replied: "Why not? Your Majesty is undoubtedly much more enlightened than I am, but your Majesty will not forbid me from believing in God, and incidentally in miracles as well." With biting irony, Catherine interposed. "In the miracles of your new friend and prophet, Cagliostro?" The favourite impudently fought her with her own weapons: "God sometimes makes use even of unworthy people to bring Light into the world—Lamettrie, Diderot and Voltaire, these 'old friends' of your Majesty, in addition to writing some very fine books, wrote a lot of infernal rubbish. It is quite possible that my friend Cagliostro is a charlatan, but it seems to me that he has something to say which has not yet been said—though one must have ears to hear his message."

Catherine grew pale and rose to her feet. Everybody else at once stood up and the dancing stopped. She took no notice, however, but silently advanced two or three steps towards the door which led to the Imperial apartments. Suddenly she turned round, and went back to Potjomkin, who had remained standing. He bowed over the hand which the Empress held out to him, and she whispered into his ear, "You are right, Grischa. I believe you, my dearest."

After the members of the Court had departed, the ball was continued. But in every corner of the room people were discussing what had happened. They had noticed that the Empress and her favourite had had words, and they had also seen that in the end the sovereign had given in. Many even whispered that during the brief altercation between Empress and favourite, they had heard the name of Cagliostro pronounced. It was not astonishing, therefore, that the spirit of Cagliostro seemed to permeate every nook and corner of the Winter Palace.

In one of the window recesses the Spanish *Chargé d'Affaires* the Marquis of Normandez, and the German Ambassador, Count Goerz, were quietly chatting. "Is Cagliostro really a Colonel in your King's army, Marquis?" Normandez shrugged his shoulders. "I do not know, Count. A few weeks ago I sent an enquiry to Madrid on the subject. I ought to get an answer quite soon now. But you, Count, surely belong to the Berlin Lodge. Tell me, is this Cagliostro really a Master or Grand Master of the Freemasons, as he gives himself out to be?"

Count Goerz gazed at his interlocutor with a smile. "To tell the truth, I do not know; I rather doubt it. But he is certainly an odd specimen. Have you heard about the miracles he is said to have worked in Mitau?" The Spaniard regretted to say he had not.

"Well, just fancy, in Mitau, Cagliostro made a young woman of the very best circles, who had run away from her husband, so mad, that she imagined she was about to become a mother through him. And instead of leading to a scandal, her parents, who were people of good standing in the neighbourhood, were proud of it. Quite mad—what? But the sequel is even madder. The pregnancy turned out to be hysteria. Whereupon the husband accused his runaway wife of adultery. Although Cagliostro is a married man, the wife's parents then wanted to prosecute him for breach of promise. The Lodge which he founded in Mitau also tried to turn him out for practising black magic, but up to the present they have been unable to do so

owing to political reasons; while an old man of that town is now said to be lying dangerously ill, as the result, so he says, of having carried on a love affair with a demon in the form of Cagliostro's wife. In fact a bouquet, a whole bouquet of fragrant episodes!"

The Spaniard laughed. "As far as I can see, they are nothing but a lot of moves and counter-moves which cancel out. What a crafty old rascal he must be! I am curious to see what Madrid will report to me about him. If, as I believe, he is neither a Count nor a Spanish Colonel, steps will have to be taken, and Potjomkin will then have to. . . ."

Count Goerz laid a warning had on his arm, "We are being watched, Marquis. But you are right, he might be dangerous." The two diplomats then separated.

Count Stroganow, the young officer who had been sent to Cagliostro by Potjomkin, looked angrily after them. He had accidentally overheard what they had been saying, and had heard them mention the name of the Adjutant General. Like the rest of the army, he too idolized the Prince, and saw in him the ideal combination of all the manly gifts and virtues. His Serene Highness's friends were sacred. How could these two old slanderers dare to meddle with such things?

A youthful voice recalled him from his reverie, and turning round he saw his friend, the son of the Polish Prince Adam Poninski. "You're wrapped up in your thoughts. Stroganow. Is it your little Princess Sserpuchowskaja this time or is it still the bewitching Mademoiselle Belinde?"

With eyes aglow the young officer stared at his interlocutor. "I was thinking of Cagliostro."

"Of Cagliostro? Do you know him? Capital! Then tell me something about him, do! My father is quite mad about him. Who is he?" The elegant figure of the young Pole stretched itself like a bow-string. "I am simply dying of curiosity. Who is Cagliostro?"

Suddenly the hall seemed to be filled with a pale diaphanous mist. A pair of deep-set eyes were piercing their way into

the young Russian's brain, and a soft and gentle warmth pervaded his limbs. In his ears rang an invisible bell. With a tongue that felt thick, he replied—"Cagliostro? . . . I do not know . . . but I think he is a saint."

The feverish brightness of the darkless nights increased and Lorenza grew every day more feeble, more pale and more transparent. She could no longer sleep at all, and felt as if some new, strange and unsuspected influence fell over her as the pallid hours of the night went by. Often, with her heart beating wildly, she would spring up out of a sort of semi-slumber, and leave the bed. And with Padrone in her arms she would hasten to a window whence she would contemplate the tender green sky and the faint traces of the stars on the horizon. The fiery red stonework of the palaces rose menacingly out of the brightness of the night. Lorenza would cross herself . . . one human face remained. Her thoughts wandered terrifyingly . . . and a wish seemed entangled in them. "Santa Maria!" and once more Lorenza made the sign of the cross.

Meanwhile the exalted visitor came more and more often to the Wizard, as Potjomkin was accustomed to call Cagliostro, and the two would talk for hours at a time about magic, alchemy, astrology, and, above all, the strange science of regeneration. They always sat in the magic closet, did this Herculean warrior of the dark locks and the fat little magician, and the northern Apollo would listen thoughtfully to the southern fawn, and would only contradict him with a certain melancholy irony whenever the Sicilian seemed to be carrying things too far.

As hour followed hour, however, and at last the champagne appeared, and with it the fair Roman lady—the Prince would grow animated indeed, his eyes would flash, his diamond studded snuff box shot shafts of fire between his refined nervous fingers, and such a torrent of cheerfulness would burst upon the room, that the pale young woman would begin to smile, and the fat wizard would smack his thighs again and again and pant in roaring cataracts of irresponsible laughter.

He continued to pursue his calling as a kindly and benevolent doctor, although he did not exercise the same exclusiveness in regard to the upper classes. His waiting-room thus presented a more interesting and more picturesque spectacle than it had done before, for now rich and poor sat cheek by jowl and waited for the comfort he could give them. The patients themselves, particularly the women and children, felt better the moment he looked them steadily in the eyes, and he had effected a few marvellous cures by this means alone. But those whom he treated by laying his little round fat hands upon them, left his rooms feeling infinitely stronger and spread the fame of Cagliostro's marvellous supernatural powers everywhere.

Nevertheless Cagliostro continued to avoid the St. Petersburg Lodges. But it was probably on that account that crowds of Freemasons, thirsting for knowledge, would foregather in his rooms every afternoon, in order to listen to his lectures on magic. He spoke of Egyptian Freemasonry, praised the great Coft, described the frontal eye of the first Adamite that God beheld, and wept tears of regret over the disappearance of Atlantis. He prophesied the discovery of the *materia prima*, and outlined the fixation of mercury by means of *strattum Saturni*—and they all listened awestruck. What a man he was—he not only healed the sick but he also knew how to increase the size of precious stones, and had solved the problem of eternal life! He was as old as the world itself! At these lectures Count Stroganow sat at the feet of the Master. He was Cagliostro's most ardent disciple in the fashionable and wealthy world, and young Poninski wrote letter after letter to Warsaw consisting of one long hymn of enchantment.

When, in response to their urgent appeals, Cagliostro at last condescended to send a child off into a magnetic sleep, their enthusiasm knew no bounds. They did not notice the uncanny effect the proceeding had upon the Master himself, but listened enraptured to the revelations made by the child, who repeated all the words of the magician in its childish babble, confirmed them by means of striking visions, and was, moreover, able to

lay bare an astonishing number of intimate details connected with the every day life of the Court—details which were certainly far above the mind of a child of tender years, or, at least, so the Master's distinguished disciples believed.

There was only one subject which he never discussed before them, and that was the secret of Regeneration.

But he was indeed wonderful to behold when, in his black gown and his great broad-brimmed black hat on his head, he gave his lectures in a darkened room. Taking a mysterious-looking parchment volume from somewhere he would read out a confused jumble on the most diverse subjects, from exorcising formulæ, recipes for the preparation of beauty waters, and the means for improving coarse homespun by the application of unmentionable filth, to pitiable descriptions of the most important alchemistic processes, such as the union of the red lion with the silver serpent. It was overwhelming!

But concerning Regeneration he said never a word.

Conflicting reports, some of which were enthusiastic and others ill-natured, arrived from Mitau regarding the Lodge he had founded there. What was that—Egyptian Freemasonry? They had never heard of such a thing! where could he have got hold of that? Was it a case of revelation?

And who was the great Coft, that incarnation of the Highest Being? Was he a new prophet, or was he after all . . . Cagliostro himself?

There was something incredibly fantastic about these Egyptian Lodges. Not only were ladies admitted to them, but some of them were actually accepted as members on an equal footing with men, in what was called an Adoption Lodge. In this Lodge there was a kissing ritual, a most sacred and puzzling kissing ritual, which at times involved the giving of five kisses.

The people of Mitau had spared no expense in the fitting out of their Lodge in the most magnificent style. The canopy of the throne had been made of heavy blue silk with silver braid and rich silver tassels, and at the back of it, behind the person of the Sacred Master, they had placed hangings of the

same materials. About six feet above the dais, they had suspended in front of the reredos a crystal ball full of water, behind which a glimmering light was placed to represent the symbolic flaming star. Above, in silver letters, they had embroidered the Hebrew word ADONAI, and on either side of the crystal ball, the signs of the seven planets had also been embroidered in silver. They had filled the whole "Temple" with rich carpets, some of which were actually hung on the walls. The walls themselves, moreover, they had covered with black velvet, and the ceiling as well, and from it they had hung a heavy gilt candelabrum with a hundred and eighty burning candles. Two huge golden chandeliers stood before the Grand Master's throne, and in front of the throne the tabernacle, lined throughout with white silk—a sort of small box, in which, when magic words were being pronounced, or when examinations for the Mastership were being held, the "dove" had to be installed—that is to say, an innocent child, either a girl or a boy, to whom, after having been put into a magnetic sleep, the sacred person of the Grand Master gave the power, which man possessed before the Fall, of commanding pure spirits.

This was enchanting! It stimulated the imagination of the people of St. Petersburg. And, after all, why should anything that had been possible in Mitau be impossible in St. Petersburg?

They implored him to found an Egyptian Lodge, but he consistently declined, and Potjomkin, who never attended the lectures, approved of his resolve. "You are right, brother," said His Serene Highness with a smile, "I can well understand you. The Empress is disappointed with Freemasonry. I know your scheme, although you have not confided it to me. It's all right, my friend. It is a case of—all comes to him who waits."

Cagliostro was satisfied, though he was somewhat discomfited by the Prince's deep knowledge of human nature. Nevertheless he ventured upon a bold move. "When can I hope, your Highness, that the Empress. . . ?" With a loud laugh, the Prince interrupted him. "Wait a bit, brother magician, wait a bit longer!" And thus good honest Giuseppe, arch-wizard,

magic apothecary, and child of fortune, had no alternative but to go on patiently healing the sick, giving lectures and discussing Regeneration with his Serene Highness.

Regeneration, or moral and physical re-birth, and how and whether it could be achieved, was the favourite subject of discussion between the two men, when they spent the long evenings together. On the very first night Cagliostro had explained to the Prince how the state of moral re-birth, or original innocence, could be achieved, and His Serene Highness had listened with the deepest attention; for, like all Russians, he was filled with remorse for his sins.

For the great mind of the sainted Coft, the system was extremely simple. To attain a moral re-birth, it was only necessary to choose a lofty mountain, which was to be called Sinai, and on the highest pinnacle of it to build a pavilion, three storeys high, to be called Zion. A hill in the park would, it is true, under certain circumstances, answer the purpose equally well, added the arch-wizard, winking at his companion; and then in affecting tones, he continued: "The room forming the upper storey should measure eighteen feet, have only one oval-shaped window on either side, and access to it should be obtained through an opening in the floor. The second room on the middle floor must be round, have no windows, and be sufficiently large to hold thirteen small iron bedsteads. The only light in the room must be provided by a little oil lamp. This room must be called Ararat. The third room, which will be on a level with the ground, is to be used as a dining-room, and must include three further small rooms—a chamber in which clothes, insigna and the other instruments of Freemasonry, ordained by Moses, are to be kept, a larder for provisions, and a closet for the needs of the body."

"So you are not above such things?" Potjomkin commented with a melancholy smile.

With a withering look Cagliostro thrust out his lower jaw and prattled on. "Thirteen Masters must lock themselves up in this pavilion, and they must not leave it for forty days. For

the first thirty-three days they will devote themselves exclusively to contemplation, exercises in Freemasonry, and the extremely trying task of preparing virgin parchment either from the skin of a gelded lamb cleaned with silk, or from the secundine of a male child born of a Jewess."

Potjomkin could not help laughing heartily, and Cagliostro avenged himself by taking a large draught of champagne from the bottle. After which he concluded gravely: "On the thirty-fourth day, the imprisoned Masters will come into visible contact with the first seven angels that were created; and on the fortieth day each of them will rejoice over his success, provided, of course, all thirteen of them have kept their hearts and thoughts absolutely pure throughout the whole period."

"Forty days? That reminds one of the forty days in the wilderness. A trifle blasphemous, isn't it?" Potjomkin observed thoughtfully. "And forty days! Come now! It's rather long. But how could anyone possibly carry out such a fast, Wizard? In the course of forty days every man has a sinful thought of some kind. The women of this world are too beautiful and vice is too sweet."

"Oh, ye of little faith! Oh Age of Darkness!" came the thundering reply. "And then the bodies of each of them will be as pure as that of the most innocent child, each will possess unlimited vision and unbounded power, and none of them will strive for aught else save that peace of the starry heavens, whereby that immortality of the soul is gained enabling a man to say in the loftiest sense, 'I am he who is here!'"

"All very fine!" observed Potjomkin absent-mindedly. "To become as pure as a child and to possess unbounded power. Quite frankly, I cannot believe it!"

Whereupon Lorenza appeared. And it now seemed as if he did believe it, after all, for he begged to be told about the secret of physical regeneration. But he had to wait a long time for this! However, apparently he did not mind waiting; for night after night, the all-powerful favourite of the Empress came in the best of spirits to take his seat in the dark magician's closet.

He brought flowers, sweets, and expensive wines, but never jewels or articles of any very great value. Nevertheless he was always heartily welcome.

What hast thou in mind, oh marvellous Giuseppe? Didst thou perchance think to deal with a royal lady no longer young who so lusted after life that she would fain have clutched at the straw of physical regeneration? Or didst thou think, in beholding thyself in the mirror, that in the end thy wild mysterious countenance, thy puffed-out chest, thy bull neck, and thy magic arts, would not only bear to stand beside the Prince, but might perchance prove victorious over him? No being ever lived that could comprehend the laws guiding the swing of thy clapper, thou bell of Palermo, which was just as well, seeing that being alone with thy thought constituted thy greatest strength!

But one fine day Potjomkin failed to appear. The newspapers reported that Her Majesty had fallen ill, and although the daily bulletins always sounded an optimistic note, the voice of rumour was better informed. It was said that the exalted lady was suffering from a malady of the kidneys which she had had for years, but that on this occasion she had been very ill and had almost succumbed. It was also whispered that throughout her illness the favourite had remained at Tsarskoye-Selo and had not stirred from the bedside of his sovereign, though things had grown very quiet there, as all the shrewdest courtiers had hurried to pay their respects to the Heir Apparent, Paul, the Empress's twenty-five year old son, whom his exalted mother could not abide. But Catherine did not keep her bed very long, and in about a week's time, when the lying reports were still floating round the city like inflated toy balloons, Potjomkin stepped into the Master's magic closet unannounced. He found his friend in high spirits, although possibly a little the worse for drink. His massive form was sprawling on a couch, and he was singing strange Sicilian ditties.

The Prince looked pale and miserable. "Are you acting a scene from the life of your late friend, the dear departed Noah,

old boy?" he enquired scornfully. Then suddenly becoming serious, he added: "But it is no laughing matter with me. Go and hold your head under the pump for a moment and come back sober. I must have a word with you." With a sharp and knowing shake of the head, the Master staggered towards his neatly arranged apothecary's chest. With a shaking hand he reached out for a bottle, emptied some of the white powder it contained into the palm of his hand, and licked it up. In an instant his drunkenness had vanished. With Sicilian pomp he croaked: "Does your Serene Highness wish to discuss the re-birth of the corporal body, so that the life of a certain exalted personage should not be continually threatened with danger?"

Potjomkin nodded approvingly. "You really are a limb of the devil, Cagliostro. Why don't you devote yourself entirely to the development of your knowledge of human nature, and drop all the other *hocus pocus*? I really mean it, old boy! You are shrewd and you have the gift of putting two and two together. You only bring discredit on yourself with all your other mumbo-jumbo."

Cagliostro gave a stony laugh. The Prince continued: "But now proceed. What is this regeneration theory of yours? If it has a rational basis, you will make something of a stir amongst us here."

Cagliostro nodded graciously. "He who wishes to prolong his life in health and peace, as long as the great Architect of the Universe thinks good to decree, but at the most for the space of five thousand three hundred and seventy-five years, must every fifty years, at the time of the full moon in May, repair to the country in the company of a friend, and after locking himself up in a lonely room, observe the strictest rules of diet for forty days."

Potjomkin interrupted him. "But what if it happens to be a woman? Must she be accompanied by another woman, or may her companion be a man? The latter alternative would be ever so much more delightful."

"What about chastity, your Highness," Cagliostro snorted. Then gesticulating wildly, he added: "And what about innocence, without which no miracle is possible?"

The Prince shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "Well go on, my good fellow. Let us see whether we can make any use of your prescriptions."

"The man who wishes to be regenerated must drink nothing but water which has fallen in the month of May, and his food must consist only of biscuits or crusts of bread. On the seventeenth day he must be bled a little, and take six drops in the morning and six at night, of a certain white mixture, increasing the dose by two drops until the thirty-second day. On that day, at dawn, he must again allow himself to be bled, and then repair to his bed, which he must not leave until the end of the quarantine. On the thirty-third day he will take his first grain of *materia prima*. The Great Architect created this *materia prima* in order to endow man with immortality. Its existence was forgotten with the appearance of black magic, and it only survived owing to the activities of exalted beings in the subterranean pyramids. As soon as the patient has partaken of this substance he loses consciousness and the power of speech for three hours, and after having convulsions, he ends with a violent fit of perspiration and a complete bodily evacuation. When he has recovered from this condition his strength must be restored by means of a strong broth prepared from a pound of beef, devoid of fat, and some wholesome vegetables. The taking of a second grain of *materia prima* on the following day produces in addition to the results I have already mentioned, a violent attack of delirium, and the loss of all the skin, hair and teeth. On the thirty-fifth day the patient must have a tepid bath. On the thirty-sixth he must drink a glass of rare and precious old wine, and take a third grain of the *materia prima*, whereupon he will sink into a gentle, peaceful and pleasant sleep. While he is asleep his hair will grow again, his gums will bring forth new teeth, and his skin will be renewed. After a saltpetre bath on the thirty-eighth day the patient will

dress himself again for the first time, will cautiously take a turn round his room, and in two tablespoonfuls of red wine will swallow ten drops of the great Coft's balsam. On the fortieth day the process comes to an end."

Potjomkin was disappointed and bored. "You have talked a long while, my friend, and said little. What good is your exhaustive prescription if it depends upon drops of a white preparation, which nobody knows, and on a *materia prima*, which will have to be dug up somewhere under the pyramids, and a balsam of the Great Coft as you call him? These are old wives' tales, my good fellow, which you need not trouble to tell me!"

At these words Cagliostro started up with an energy surprising in one of his natural laziness. "Old wives' tales?" Two swift strides brought him to a small steel trunk in a corner. Despite its weight he lifted it like a toy, and with a fine flourish laid it on the table in front of His Serene Highness. For a moment it seemed as if the table would collapse beneath the load. The Prince watched the fat man with an air of indifference, and reached out for his snuff box. Yawning he made the sign of the cross in front of his open mouth. He was clearly on his guard.

"Old wives' tales?" shrieked Cagliostro again, and with fingers trembling with rage, he seized hold of the trunk, which was decorated with all kinds of characters in gold, and threw it open. "And what is that in there?" The contents of the trunk consisted of a number of silver vessels, fine porcelain jars, and crystal bottles, containing red, green and milky-looking fluids. Owing to the shock the trunk had been given, some of these seemed to have become effervescent, for they were bubbling and boiling furiously. With his plump first finger the little fat man pointed to each vessel and bottle in turn. "*Materia prima!* The Great Coft's balsam! *Strattum Saturni!* *Barba Jovis!* Old wives' tales—eh?"

"All hocus pocus probably!" said Potjomkin indifferently, as he closed the trunk again. "We can make no headway, my

friend, if that is all your wisdom. I don't want to hurt your feelings, my darling fellow. Possibly everything is as you say. But I shall not move a finger to induce the Empress to believe in your magic casket."

Quite unabashed, Cagliostro rejoined: "If you tell her about it, your Highness, she will believe it. Although she is Empress, she is, after all, and always will be only a woman."

The Prince nodded coldly. "Quite right, she is, as you say, a woman, but that makes me all the less inclined to induce her to believe in all this. For, as she believes in me, I must be infallible. Do you understand, my friend? And if your methods failed, as I suspect they would, my infallibility would vanish with them. And that is just what I wish to avoid."

"And then there is something else," continued Cagliostro, thrusting the trunk aside. The Prince looked at him expectantly. "What?" Eagerly the Master enquired. "She only has these seizures when she is agitated?" His Serene Highness smiled. "Now you are getting nearer the root of the matter."

Without saying a word the miracle-monger looked the favourite steadily in the eye. A question big with meaning lay in this dumb stare. Still smiling Potjomkin struck the table with the palm of his hand. "Fiddlesticks! Questions are always foolish!"

Cagliostro continued to stare at him calmly and steadily for some minutes longer. Then he passed his hand once or twice over his own face with the movement he was accustomed to use in sending people into a mesmeric sleep. An expression at once pompous and cunning crept into his face. The Prince continued to stare calmly into the distance. "I knew we should understand each other."

The fat little man drew himself up. With savage dignity the mighty Orient of Medina, whose voice had so long been hushed, sent a loud and vigorous roar from his lungs. "But first of all I must see her."

With a shrug of his shoulders the Prince turned aside. "What is the Countess doing all this time, my friend?"

It was high time for His Serene Highness to say something, otherwise Cagliostro would have had to begin speaking of certain things which might have destroyed his credit with the Prince. Truth to tell, Cagliostro had imagined events would move much more quickly in St. Petersburg. He had been right to make his first appearance there as a doctor, to spend money lavishly, and play the part of a public benefactor. Up to that point his calculations had turned out correct. On the other hand, it seemed clear that the Empress had but little liking for Freemasonry, and none whatever for magic and mysticism. Oh, if only he had the Baroness Elisa of Mitau with him! And he could not make Potjomkin out. His Serene Highness was incomprehensible—aye, even a trifle uncanny. His insight and knowledge of human nature were greater than Giuseppe's. He had not been greatly impressed, even by the experiment with the little orphan, for when the child, in her somnambulistic trance had begun to speak of the great lady on the throne, the Prince had indignantly closed his snuff box with a bang, as a sign for the incident to be closed. But now Cagliostro might certainly hope to be standing before the Empress within a measurable distance of time.

The Empress! It was all rather weird! The affair with the Vice-King of Naples had not been nearly so complicated, for on that occasion Lorenza had played a part. Lorenza . . . and once again his experience in Mitau loomed menacingly before his eyes. Had the day come at last? Potjomkin was a weird creature. Jealousy thick as ox-blood surged to the Sicilian's brain and made him giddy.

Moreover, he was worried by a great ebb in his affairs. His lavish expenditure had made too many heavy inroads on his resources, and he could not continue along those lines any longer. He remembered a little trick to which he had often before had recourse and which he was resolved to put once more to the test. But this time, determined to be more cautious than he had been in Mitau, he was anxious not to sacrifice any of his crowds of disciples, which might make them suspicious.

He had been careful not to repeat the same old mistakes, so that he might not be driven to the necessity of leaving the scene of his struggles under a cloud in the dead of night. . . . And yet—even here he had made a foolish mistake.

A few weeks previously a woman had come to him with her baby who was dangerously ill, and, after the preliminary examination, had been conducted straight into the magic closet. The woman, who was well-to-do, had been the last to be interviewed, and suddenly Cagliostro was overcome by his old demon of acquisitiveness. He had not the remotest idea of what ailed the infant, but nevertheless swore by all the saints that he would cure it by supernatural means within the space of a fortnight, provided the mother would agree, through his agency, to pay two thousand silver roubles to the Invisible Powers. Beaming with delight, the woman, who was the wife of a commercial man, agreed to the transaction, and brought the bag of silver that same afternoon.

The money was now all spent, the child had died, and on the next day the good lady was to be given another baby, whom Benito had procured for cash in the outskirts of St. Petersburg, and dressed in the swaddling clothes of her own dead child. The baby, it is true, was fair, but by means of arts which had been tested and practised for years, its hair had been made to appear dark. It was to be hoped the child would not be given a bath too soon, otherwise the affair would begin to look fishy. Giuseppe had already heard of the mines in Siberia—No! he would never be able to stand them! Potjomkin would have to use his influence. But who would be able to persuade him to do so? Cagliostro shrank back in horror. Nevertheless he knew who could do it.

The next day the child, miraculously cured, was fetched away. The mother was delighted, but the father, a disagreeable old busybody, circled suspiciously round and round the dark body who was snugly asleep, grunting incomprehensible words into his long bushy Russian beard. It was high time!

Cagliostro went to his wife's boudoir, a room he usually

avoided. When he entered she was sitting at the window and did not look up at him. Padrone ran and hid himself behind her chair. Her husband's voice was strangely loud and cutting, as he said, "Lorenza, I require your help."

Still she did not look up. Not a line in her tranquil features changed, as she replied, "Already?"

He explained the situation to her. That evening she would have to receive Potjomkin in his stead, as he would not be home till midnight. There were long pauses between his sentences; he stammered broken phrases which he constantly repeated. She was silent and allowed to drink the bitter cup to the dregs. When at last he came to an end of what he had to say, she quietly fixed her eyes upon him. But he could not bear her look. A feverish heat pervaded the little room; invisible wings rustled along the walls hung with grey silk, and far away in the street a voice chanted a melancholy Russian song.

Her clear sweet voice sounded calm and even cheerful as she replied, "Giuseppe, you are too clever not to know why you are asking me to do this. But I will do it!"

Padrone was alone. He lay on the couch and gave a little wag of his tail when, at the usual hour that evening the Prince entered the magic closet. The little dog gave him a friendly welcome with his intelligent eyes. Then, getting up and stretching himself, for he had been asleep, he jumped down in the best of moods, ran to His Serene Highness, sniffed him, wagged his tail again, and then ran back to the couch.

"You want me to sit down? Very well, Padrone. Up! Come and sit by me and tell me all about Lorenza."

The dog wagged his tail more vigorously when he heard his mistress's name, pricked up his ears, turned his head towards a door, sprang on to the couch, and nestling up to the Prince, allowed a tiny tip of his tongue to protrude. Potjomkin stroked his back affectionately and with rhythmic regularity. Suddenly he felt the dog's warm tongue on his hand, and was over-

come with a feeling of gratitude. "Dear old Padrone, now you have told me such a nice lot about her. If only she would come!"

Padrone laid his little paw on Potjomkin's thigh, and rested his muzzle on his friend's hand. The Prince looked at him. "What do you want then?" The dog looked towards the table in the middle of the room. A piece of paper was lying on it. Potjomkin got up; the note was for him. The tall strong man trembled in every limb. His heart seemed turned to stone. The little note was worth an Empress.

He threw his head back. The dog's intelligent and loyal eyes tried to catch his. With a firm step the Russian followed the animal to the door.

They said not a word. The first glance was enough to draw them to each other. From the very beginning they had been aware of the calamity that must one day overtake them, sadder than any mourning, and more piercing than any pain. But they only gazed the more deeply into each other's eyes, and exchanged longer and more passionate kisses. It was as if each were already begging the other's pardon for what could not fail to happen, and wished to make up to the other fully for what could no longer happen. It was the sweet embrace of two lovers over whose heads a sword is hanging, the long kiss of lost souls under whose feet the earth yawns in an abyss. Lorenza's young uncontrolled passion, quivering with desire, bloomed rich and red as a rose. But Potjomkin, in whose arms too many women had lain, felt with a burning certainty that he had at last found her whom all his life he had sought in vain, and that he had found her too late.

It was three o'clock in the morning, and in this land of bright nights the sun was already high above the horizon when Cagliostro, blind-drunk, returned home. Hardly had he reached his room when he was overcome with mad rage. He sprang up, and staggered through the magic closet to Lorenza's room. It was locked. He shook the handle violently. Padrone gave a low bark. Dressed in a thin silk nightdress Lorenza came

out. She had been expecting him. "He has promised to stand godfather to the child to-day."

He stared vacantly at her. Lorenza returned his look coldly, the corners of her mouth drooped a little. Her eyes had a clear far-away expression in them, and her face was tinged a soft shimmering red. She was more beautiful than ever, and in a moment Cagliostro was filled with bitter lust. With stinging anguish he came close up to her and followed her as she retreated into the room. In a flash she was by the bed, and had snatched a little dagger from beneath the pillow. Cagliostro dropped heavily on a chair, and listened in astonishment to the heavy beating of his heart right up in his throat. He seemed to be slowly collapsing, and was terrible to behold. At last he rose and sidled awkwardly out of the room.

A buzz of whispers, an ever-increasing murmur of voices, a smile that grew into a loud and hearty laugh, filled the great city. People put their heads together, and, full of malicious curiosity, looked for a certain notice in the papers. They read, handed the paper on, and were highly amused.

In His Serene Highness's palace there was the greatest confusion. Count Stroganow, the adjutant, had been waiting for an hour in the dainty dressing-room. At last a bell was heard to ring. A valet ran into the prince's bedroom with his morning chocolate and announced that Count Stroganow was waiting with important information concerning the Spanish Count. A moment later Potjomkin, still unwashed, with his hair unkempt, and wearing his light blue Turkish dressing-gown, heavily trimmed with fur, burst boisterously into the room. He seemed to be radiantly happy, and nodded jauntily as Stroganow saluted him. "Well, what has happened now? What has the Wizard done this time?"

Nervously Stroganow unfolded one of the newspapers he had brought with him. "The Marquis of Normandez. . . ." His Serene Highness snatched the paper from his hands.



IN A FLASH SHE HAD SNATCHED A LITTLE DAGGER FROM
BENEATH THE PILLOW

“What, the Spanish *Chargé d’Affaires*?” he asked, and became absorbed in what he read.

The Marquis of Normandez was making an appeal to the people of St. Petersburg, warning them against an alleged doctor who had suddenly appeared in their city, posing as a Spanish Colonel, under the title of Count Cagliostro. As the result of personal investigations the Marquis had ascertained that the said Cagliostro was neither a Spanish Colonel nor a Count, and there were accordingly good grounds for supposing him to be nothing but an arch-swindler, for the medical council of St. Petersburg entertained the gravest doubts concerning his right to practise as a doctor. Wherefore his Excellency the Marquis of Normandez felt it incumbent upon him on behalf of His Majesty of Spain to warn all whom it might concern regarding the above-mentioned Cagliostro, more particularly because, according to reliable information, he had, by means of certain knavish tricks already succeeded in securing the good-will of distinguished—nay, it was even said—of exceedingly powerful personages.

Laughing loudly, Potjomkin allowed the paper to drop. Well-nigh petrified with surprise, Stroganow, who had feared a violent outburst of rage, stared into his face. The Prince patted him affably on the shoulder. “That is a reference to us, my good man.” Then picking up the paper he read the notice through once more. “Well, here’s a pretty kettle of fish! What a mad clown he is, to be sure, old Cagliostro, or whatever his name is! But I like him more and more every day. How can he help it if he is not of noble blood? He has a thousand times more right to call himself a Count than that old fool of a Normandez has to pass as a Marquis. Did I abolish pedantry and empty formalities in the army, only to be brought face to face with them everywhere in daily life? You’ve made a mistake, my lord Marquis! Now listen, Stroganow. On this slip of paper you will find the name of a merchant on the Fontanka. Go to him at once, as fast as you can, and inform him that I will stand godfather to the child whom Count

Cagliostro has just snatched from the jaws of death. After that you will proceed immediately to Normandez, and bring him to me here alive or dead. You must have him here in half an hour, for I must start for Tsarskoye in an hour."

Barely half an hour had elapsed before the adjutant showed the Spanish *Chargé d' Affaires* into Potjomkin's study. Inflated with the pride of authorship, the little man was as yellow as a guinea. The Prince was already dressed and was sitting, radiant and grand as a mid-summer day, in a beautiful arm-chair, and beside him sat—Cagliostro. When His Serene Highness saw the little diplomat enter, a thousand humorous wrinkles spread over his face, and merry little elves seemed to dance in his large dark eyes. The Master, however, had assumed an air of outraged dignity, which was all the more successful, seeing that on this particular morning his deep-set eyes seemed to glow from out the depths of strange and darksome caverns.

The diplomat greeted the Prince with a graceful court bow, convinced that he would leave the audience chamber covered with glory. He was on the point of speaking when Potjomkin, smiling scornfully, and with his hand spread out on a newspaper which lay before him, demanded: "Am I right in supposing, my lord Marquis, that you are the author of the lampoon that has to-day appeared in all the papers?"

Cagliostro's great chin was thrust forward in a manner truly terrifying to behold. In low tones, he added: "Do you acknowledge this?"

The wrinkled little old man did not deign to vouchsafe him so much as a glance, but kept his eyes fixed rigidly on the Prince. "If you are referring to the warning which has been printed in the papers to-day, *mon prince*, I acknowledge with the utmost readiness that I am the author of it. But there is no justification whatever for calling this notice, which contains the truth, a lampoon. I have brought the documents relating to it with me."

Potjomkin's face brightened. "Well, I may as well see

them," he said. Astonished at his tone, the Spanish *Chargé d'Affaires* came forward and handed him some papers. Not even troubling to read them first, His Serene Highness straightway tore them up, and contemptuously let the fragments fall to the floor. "That, my dear sir, is my way of dealing with such vapourings. But with the lampoonist himself, my method is different. Your miserable effusion in the papers has attacked not only my friend, Count Cagliostro, but also myself both directly and indirectly. I must therefore request you either to withdraw your warning in every shape and form in which it has appeared in the papers to-day, or else to take back your credentials and leave the city within twenty-four hours."

Normandez grew pale. "But I have nothing to withdraw! There is not a word in my appeal which cannot be substantiated. As questions of rank and title are the first concern of diplomacy, and as, moreover, a man who tries to increase his reputation among his fellows by false pretences levels a blow at the honour of my country, of which he pretends to be a native. . . ."

"Pooh!" interjected the Prince, feeling bored. "You have my ultimatum."

The diplomat retreated a step. "*Mon prince*, that is having recourse to violence. You must know that the persons of diplomats are sacred. Give a thought to the consequences!"

Potjomkin laughed aloud. "Splendid! You will arrange to convey your sacred person out of St. Petersburg within twenty-four hours, my lord Marquis, or if you refuse to do so of your own free will, my Cossacks of the Guard will perforce be obliged to remove you. Do you imagine, you fool, that your King will declare war on me on your account? The idea would never occur to him. He is far too wise. Hence! Away! I do not wish to see your face again—foul lampoonist!"

Pale and agitated, the diplomat withdrew. Cagliostro sat silently by, breathlessly watching this manifestation of great and genuine power. Yes, this was indeed power, to be able to make the minister of a foreign State dance, first on one leg and

then on another like a stuffed doll! Filled with envy and jealousy, Cagliostro was obliged to acknowledge that this giant among men wielded a power which had not been obtained by roguery. . . . But might not even his power vanish in a night? . . .

"Why are you looking so thoughtful, Wizard? Have I not vindicated your honour most brilliantly?"

"Indeed you have! Would that I might one day be as powerful!"

"'Pon my soul, your ambition soars high! But it will come, my friend, it will come!"

The events of the day—the warning against Cagliostro, which the Spanish *Chargé d'Affaires* had published in all the papers, the dismissal of the Marquis of Normandez, which broke all the rules of diplomatic usage, and finally Potjomkin's promise to stand god-father to a merchant's child mysteriously saved from death—were facts eminently calculated to provoke derision and excitement in the scandal-mongering, scoffing and mystery-loving people of St. Petersburg. The samovar of sensation was bubbling, boiling and hissing, heated by the fire of suspicions that grew every hour more fierce.

Why did His Serene Highness take such a lively interest in the magician? Potjomkin was not a Freemason, nor, until that moment, had he shown the smallest interest in occult doctrines, while all the world knew that he had but a low opinion of alchemy. The intimacy of this august, free and self-reliant favourite of fortune with the arch-prophet of the secret sciences was a puzzle. Was it possible that after all he was no longer a free agent? Or had the heroic Saul become Paul, dazzled by the vision of a mystical Damascus? Or was the Countess a factor in the game? She was very beautiful, and the Prince, although he had been the recognised favourite of Her Majesty the Empress for many years, was known to be a great lover of the fair sex. He was the hero of an endless list of gallant episodes, over each one of which the Empress had

almost died of laughter. It was certain that the fair Roman girl was playing her part in the attractions provided by her wonder-working husband, and it was even said that a servant at the Hôtel de l'Europe had hinted at certain things which it would have been dangerous to utter aloud. But what had the husband to say to all this? Did he know about it? How could anything so important have remained hidden from so experienced a wizard and astrologist whose fame had reached to the ends of the earth? And as he seemed to connive at the fact that his beautiful wife was the mistress of the most powerful man in the Russian Empire, it was quite clear that he would have a share in this power. Thus the number of his followers rapidly increased.

On the same morning that the Marquis of Normandez had been given his *congé*, Potjomkin drove to Tsarskoye to present his report. Catherine knew her fine young lover well, and above all she knew how to wait and was endowed with a wonderful capacity for patience. If anything on earth could be relied upon, it was, in her opinion, Potjomkin. These two great personages were united by such innumerable bonds that it seemed as if their violent separation must lead to complete chaos in the cosmic order, the downfall of the solar system. Potjomkin had not confessed anything. But his eyes and his voice were eloquent enough. She knew that he was in love with the Italian girl. Good Heavens, why not? And the Normandez affair was also quite in order, for in any case it was a piece of impudent tactlessness on the part of a diplomat to meddle with matters that did not concern him. The Spaniard had shamefully overstepped his rights and privileges; it had therefore been entirely justifiable to hit out at him. The only unpleasant feature in the affair was that the Prince now seemed anxious for the Empress to receive Cagliostro, as he was an extremely clever doctor. But Catherine did not wish to see him. She had heard too many strange tales about the wizard. What if, after all, he proved superior to her? It did

not suit her to receive Cagliostro, and yet she knew that if Grigorij begged her to do so, she would be forced to give way.

And what of Cagliostro himself?

Apparently he was the only person whom the bright nights seemed unable to touch. Nevertheless when they ended, they left as the legacy of their ghastly fever a host of dangerous thoughts in his mind. Revenge! they whispered. Revenge! And Power! Between these two poles the stout equator of the Sicilian Comet performed its mad revolution day by day. If his wife were present he wore a martyred look. Alone with Potjomkin he was awkwardly familiar, and when he was with his followers he was grave and mysterious. Thus did Cagliostro bear his cuckoldom, and no one dared to laugh. They left him in peace, as if it had to be.

Meanwhile Lorenza and Potjomkin had but one thought, and that was for each other. Ardently they lived through the summer of their passion, as though they knew naught of the rains, the sere and yellow leaves of autumn. And yet they knew all. Every day at sundown Lorenza, clad in men's clothes, or thickly veiled, arrived at the palace of the Prince. The guards allowed her to pass and she would make her way unannounced up and down stairs and along passages to the little corner room, whose lofty arched windows looked out on the river.

She loved the room with its dark brocade hangings, its few choice pictures of the saints picked out in vermilion and gold, and the little lamps burning ever before them night and day.

And she loved it to-day. For a long while she had sat silent in the gathering dusk of the room. Suddenly her voice rang out calm and low through the twilight. "Do you believe in God?" His deep fiery "Yes," did not surprise her. Yet her next question sounded hesitating, almost reproachful. "Then why do you spend so much time with Giuseppe?"

She knew by his voice that he had risen to his feet. "Oh, his name is Giuseppe, is it? Why do I spend so much time with Giuseppe? I find him amusing, and also I cannot help

having a certain admiration for him. He might have been a great man, Lorenza, if he had not. . . ." He paused. There was a trace of agitation in her voice as she repeated, "If he had not. . . . What were you going to say?"

His voice became deeper as he replied thoughtfully. "You are his wife, Lorenza, and yet you also believe in God."

There was an audible shudder in her voice as it echoed wearily through the darkness. "I know not whether I believe in God. The Lord have mercy on me! Methinks I believe only in the gentle Saviour and the sweet Madonna. God is terrible. He is a God of wrath and over hard for the heart of man. It is a fearsome thing to think of Him. For He is ever demanding what is beyond the strength of man—and thus man becomes a sinner. None can do what is right in the sight of God. But the Lord Jesus, who is so sad and gentle, is different. But that is not what you were going to say. You were saying that Giuseppe might have been a great man, if he had not. . . ."

His voice sounded deep and warm in her ear. "If he had not had you for a wife, dearest. You rob him of the assurance with which he might have pursued his perilous path, and without which success cannot be achieved in so daring a game. If you had only been what he is. . . ." Suddenly he broke off. But she could not endure his silence. "Well? Say what you were going to say!"

Gravely and kindly he continued, "You two might have seen a great Empire at your feet!"

Mingled feelings of bitterness and of fear almost choked her, and then, her voice rising almost into another key, she cried, "*Apage!* the Empire of Satan!" And she crossed herself.

Then again for the last time they spoke of Cagliostro. They knew naught as yet of the ineluctable doom that was overtaking them. The Prince still toyed with the thought of holding the child-woman fast in his arms and stealing her away. The days slipped by in stifling summer heat until at last a terrible storm burst with a wild roar over the city.

Heavy drops were falling from the trees, and, clinging to each other, they looked out on to the garden, and took deep breaths of the fragrance which the rain had set free. "Do you believe in miracles, Lorenza?" the Prince asked softly.

"I was just thinking of that. Yes, I believe in miracles." Brooding uneasily, he continued, "Even in Cagliostro's?" Stroking his hand gently, she replied, "Yes, in his too. But they are not miracles—only the inexplicable forerunners of real miracles. The miracle is always within. How can I explain what I mean? It is like the storm; while it is raging it seems to be a miracle, but the miracle only comes afterwards, when everything has grown wonderful and still, and the senses are at peace. At first, while the lightning is flashing and the thunder roaring, every creature has its own form of fear; but afterwards all of us are united together in a feeling of wondrous peace. That's what a miracle is like. It can never be brought about by force. Even Giuseppe cannot do that. It is true, he does not even wish to. He is satisfied with the storm."

A moment later the Prince's voice rang almost hard. "Lorenza, how do you know all that?" Softly came her reply, "I have always been alone, my friend. I have perhaps meditated a little. When one has been silent so long, one is like a vessel into which thoughts have fallen drop by drop, so as gradually to fill it—not the thoughts of a fevered brain, but the thoughts of a peaceful soul."

The Prince was seized with a kind of paroxysm. "Leave him, Lorenza!" In a shaking voice, she replied, "I cannot. The Church holds me bound to him for all eternity. I am quite sinful enough without that."

Frantically he implored her. "Come away with me! Leave everything!"

A shudder ran through her frame. She threw herself into his arms and caressed him with an ardour at once passionate and timid. "Thank you, thank you, Grigorij! But you need your grand and lordly existence! You could not live without power!" She bent her head close to his, and her golden hair

mingled with his dark locks. "Do not let us speak of this again. What must be will be."

He wanted to answer her, but her little fingers sealed his mouth. "No, no, be quiet. Don't say any more about it!" And he clasped her to his breast.

They loved each other; but time, which hates all love, brought the grey of autumn. Grey and low hung the heavy sky, over the rain-washed city. Grey and low crept the pallid thoughts of men, pursued without ceasing by the cold rippling voice of rumour. Time muttered her curses upon the lovers, and sent autumn before its appointed hour.

It had long been known in St. Petersburg that every day Lorenza visited Potjomkin. The Empress knew it too. The Prince, it seemed, had forgotten that his sovereign was a woman, and a woman who loved him. He had almost ceased to show her his face. And she knew the reason. With calm deliberation, she began to spin the web which would entangle him beyond all hope of escape, and in its slender and relentless meshes she invisibly wove the vengeance of an outraged woman.

Two other hands were likewise spinning, and it was small wonder that at last the two webs should meet. If two lines are drawn from the circumference of a circle to its centre, they must surely meet.

The number of Cagliostro's patients had dwindled of late, for his acts of charity and his gifts of money had grown few and far between. But his lectures on magic still drew huge audiences. For the listeners it was a strange and rare experience to attend lectures on occult science delivered by a husband who was betrayed by His Serene Highness.

Cagliostro had succeeded in securing one or two powerful disciples who had considerable influence at Court, through whom he hoped to effect his purpose. Indeed, only a few days previously General Jelagin had informed him that the Empress had told him with her own lips that she would before long receive Cagliostro.

And thus Giuseppe Balsamo spun the web which was to

procure for him the sweet joy of revenge. If only he could succeed in binding Catherine to him by certain services known only to himself, the Prince's downfall was a certainty. He was bursting with triumph, but he took care not to breathe a word of it to Lorenza, for it was important that the Prince should suspect nothing. To his delight he discovered that the Prince's fall from grace would actually occasion great satisfaction in certain circles, for the great man's fist weighed heavily on the contemptible crowd about the Court. Cagliostro almost shuddered as he thought of so colossal a downfall. But how sweet it was to wrench power from the hands of the mighty, to hang like a bell over the universe, and thunder his own melody above the heads of men!

One day he was informed that Her Majesty, the Empress and Ruler of all the Russians, wished to receive him at the Winter Palace, and that the audience was to take place on a Wednesday afternoon. The great day dawned. Cagliostro decided to receive his patients notwithstanding. Benito had thrown open the door covered with black velvet, and the Master was just preparing to make an imposing entry among the little handful of people who had assembled in his waiting room, when, through the doors at the opposite end of the room, some strange visitors made their appearance. One of them was a thin man dressed in black, as stiff as a ram-rod, who even a mile off would at once have been recognised as an Englishman. Another was a tall police officer, and behind them came two police officials. The Master turned a trifle pale, but nevertheless advanced towards his patients with his usual majestic ease, when suddenly the voice of someone crying "Halt!" rang through the room.

It was the police officer who had spoken. With the stiff Englishman at his side, he came towards Cagliostro. "My lord," he said, "would you be so good as to withdraw with Mr. Roger-son, Her Majesty's Physician in Ordinary, whom I now present to you, and grant him an interview?"

Neither the Englishman nor Cagliostro attempted to ex-

change the courtesies that should have followed their introduction to each other. Sworn enemies as they were, they merely eyed each other coldly. Very haughtily Cagliostro cried: "I have more important things to do than to grant interviews. There are sick people waiting here. What is it you want with me, sir?" The police officer attempted to intervene. "It would perhaps be better if my lord Count would retire to the next room . . . the matter is confidential and also somewhat delicate." But in thus addressing the fat little magician, he had mistaken his man. "I know nothing of delicate matters. Count Cagliostro is accustomed to settling all his affairs quiet openly. Speak out, sir!" And he stared truculently at the Englishman.

The latter did not wait to be asked a second time. "I have come to request you," he said coldly, "to show me the medical diplomas which authorize you to practise as a doctor."

Proudly Cagliostro retorted at the top of his voice, "I have no diplomas. I heal by new methods. My successes speak for themselves. Thousands regard me as a benefactor."

Calmly the Englishman replied: "You have no diplomas? That is all I wished to know. Then allow me to inform you, in the presence of this police officer, that according to an order issued by Her Majesty yesterday, you are instantly to give up all medical treatment of Her Majesty's subjects, and are not to practise again at any future time, within the confines of the Russian Empire, on pain of immediate expulsion from Her Majesty's domains. Clear the room!" he cried, turning to the police.

"It is all a pack of lies!" yelled Cagliostro. "Take the man into custody, major! Look at this letter! Her Majesty is receiving me this afternoon at the Winter Palace. Now, do you still believe the edict this rogue has shown you has a word of truth in it?"

Utterly bewildered, the major looked first at one and then at the other. "Both documents are in order," he stammered. "But it is not for me to express any opinion. I must carry out my instructions, which are to execute the orders of Her Ma-

jesty's physician. I am sorry, my lord Count, I must clear the room and ask your lordship to refrain from any further medical activity. Hi, you there!" he roared to the patients. "Be off! Clear out!"

The room gradually emptied.

"Confounded conspiracy!" shrieked the little man, purple and shaking all over with fury. "I shall see to it, Mr. Physician in Ordinary, and you Major, that neither of you are holding your posts by this time to-morrow."

"Have pity on me, my Lord," groaned the police officer. "I only did my duty."

The Englishman calmly took a step forward and drew a letter from his coat pocket. "You need not be alarmed, major," he said. "You will retain your post. But as for you, friend Balsamo, I advise you to control your excitement, and read what my old friend Reynolds writes to me from London. . . ."

Panting with rage Cagliostro flung a glass at his head. "Swine of hell! You will know even more about me in a day or two!" Bursting with indignation he dashed out of the room, and slammed the door so violently behind him that the plaster on the walls cracked. Hissing with indignation he fled to Lorenza. He could not understand what had happened. But it was quite plain that he must repair to Potjomkin at once.

It was nearly two o'clock in the afternoon. Cagliostro was stamping to and fro in his magic closet while his agitation gradually calmed down. Lorenza had left the house about an hour before. Benito, the rascal, had crept into hiding, as was his wont when his master's temper was inclined to be stormy, and the dear lad smelt a thrashing. Cagliostro was hungry and in a very bad mood. He had no money. And there was that letter he had received from Prince Poninski, who was so immensely wealthy, inviting him to come to Warsaw as his guest, in order to discuss abstruse subjects with him and carry out alchemistic experiments in the nobleman's magnificent laboratory. Cagliostro had heard a good deal about Warsaw; it ap-

peared to be a gay city, fond of display, and almost like a European capital. The invitation pleased him. There were certainly heaps of money to be made there. But how could he get there? He had not even enough to cover the expenses of the journey, far less to travel with the usual pomp associated with the name of Cagliostro. And a further question loomed gigantic in the sky over him and his fate. In the end a spirit such as his could not be satisfied with gold alone! Power, power and again power! *Corpo di bacco!* Here was a great game! The figure of Prince Potjomkin had bewitched him. When he thought of the incident with Normandez. . . . *Santo porco!* Power—that was what he wanted, and what he was in search of! The only purpose that stupid money could serve was to allow you to fling it away. It was only a means to an end. He knew that he was born to greatness.

The clock told him that it was time for him to dress and he ceased pacing to and fro like a wild beast. In an hour and a half he would be in the Winter Palace. Mad with rage, he rang the bell for the tenth time, and ordered the porter, who hurried up to him in deadly terror, to keep a look out for that young scamp Benito.

A sound of heavy knocking was heard. There was something in the knock which struck him as familiar. Go on knocking!—he thought to himself angrily, and again began to pace to and fro with heavy tread. Once more a knock was heard. But nothing mattered now. There was but one thing in the world for him to do now, change his clothes—Catherine—and turn the world upside down. For the third time the knocking was heard. At the same moment the door was gently opened and an extremely suspicious looking creature shuffled in. He was a thin withered little man, unwashed and unshaved, his clothes shining with grease, and with the penetrating eye of a detective. Behind him a policeman, as massive as a wardrobe in uniform, thumped into the room.

“Get out!” roared the angry turkey-cock. There was no

time to receive visitors now. He had to dress at once in order to visit his friend the Empress.

"Your Highness will forgive the liberty," lisped the little man courteously, "but I will only keep him a moment. His Excellency the Prussian Ambassador, Count Goerz, has applied to the Russian courts on behalf of the sometime *Chargé d'Affaires* of the Spanish Legation, and I have been commissioned by the court to present you with this little promissory note which fell due some time ago. It dates back from five years ago, in Cadiz, your Highness," he piped, cheerful though apologetic. "It will no doubt have slipped your Highness's memory; that can so easily happen. How can you help it? Are we not all miserable sinners!" Thereupon he produced a promissory note which was almost yellow with age. Cheerfully he babbled on, "Only a trifle, your dear Highness—three hundred little gold pieces. May I request you. . . ?" And he stretched out a dirty hand.

Three hundred! But His dear Highness did not even possess thirty. Nevertheless the promissory note was in order. But how the deuce had they dug it up? Particularly as it had been made out by the Marquis Pellegrini. That damned Normandez! Cagliostro firmly resolved not to make any more enemies.

"Wait until to-morrow! I have no money to-day and what is more I have no time. It is already three o'clock, *sapristi!* and the Empress is expecting me at four at the Winter Palace."

The wizened little man chuckled with cordial sympathy. "I can well understand, my dear Count. But what can we do?" he whined gently, as if to himself. "Then I shall be obliged to sell up one or two of your things, my dear, sweet lord. Terribly sad! But it's the order of the court."

Even a tea-urn will explode if the lid is fastened on too tightly, so what could be expected of a volcano of goodly Sicilian proportions? Cagliostro roared until the walls shook and shook again. "Then sell up, you carrion crow! I must go!"

"But first just show us any gold trinkets you may have or

any nice little diamonds. Hi, Iwan!" and with a tone of authority hitherto unsuspected the official turned to the massive creature in uniform. "The rings off the fingers of the insolvent debtor!" The policeman drew nearer. Cagliostro seized a heavy decanter with which to defend himself and whirled it round his head like a madman. The wizened gnome retreated, but the policeman pressed forward with callous and stoical calm.

Once more the door flew open and a calm and stately officer, with an icy countenance, stepped heavily into the room. After contemplating the scene before him for a moment with an unpleasant expression, he strode firmly towards Cagliostro. The whirling decanter seemed to have no terror for him. And placing his right hand on Cagliostro's shoulder, he said:

"In the name of the Empress, I arrest you."

The decanter ceased to whirl. A deathly stillness reigned in the room. Cagliostro dropped his arm to his side. Where could Lorenza be all this time? He snarled and his blood-shot eyes stared fixedly before him.

"For child murder and the substitution of a changeling," growled Cagliostro's last tormentor.

Aha! that cursed merchant and his suspicions! So Potjomkin must have betrayed and cheated him in spite of his promise to be the child's godfather. Then he had flung Lorenza into the Prince's arms for nothing! Should he fly and throw himself at the Empress's feet and confess everything? She would never forgive the Prince for what he had done! He moved in the direction of the door.

"Useless!" said the police officer phlegmatically, his manner and voice becoming more mechanical every minute. "The house is surrounded." He went over to the door, opened it and revealed a double guard.

Caught! Caught like a rat in a trap! And yet in five minutes he might have been able to shake the world to its foundations! As in a dream Cagliostro gazed at the cold bright steel of the bayonets. Suddenly the guards vanished like

spectres, and in the open doorway stood a footman in gorgeous livery.

“Her Majesty the Empress!”

In a flash the room was empty. She entered with smiling eyes. “I beg your pardon, Count Cagliostro, for the trifling inconveniences, but I wished to see how so great a wizard behaved under the inevitable blows of fortune.”

She looked him up and down. Before she had finished speaking he had already recovered his composure. A trifle too plump, but a beautiful creature. He laid the decanter down, and bowed low. Catherine sat down in a comfortable chair, somewhat taken aback by the devilish composure of the monster.

And thus the two surveyed each other—Cagliostro still struggling a little for air. He had not expected to find the Empress looking more beautiful than she did in the portraits he had seen of her. But he was accustomed to hatching fresh plots at a moment’s notice.

“Be seated, Count. I can well understand that you are surprised to see me here. Pray imagine that you are not confronted by the Empress but only by an inquisitive lady of the Court, who wished to come face to face with the great magician.” And Catherine gave a low laugh.

“I was already thinking that!” Cagliostro snorted in reply, laughing coarsely; and looking at the Empress with a pleased smile, he calmly took a seat close to the armchair she occupied. The fellow was undoubtedly a devil. Involuntarily a faint blush suffused the Empress’s cheeks. “You know, Count, women are inquisitive. And although I am Catherine, you must allow me to claim the privilege of the weaker sex. And now tell me the true reason why you wished to make my acquaintance.”

With complete disregard of Court etiquette, the impudent Italian crossed his legs. “To be quite frank, people had told me so much about the Semiramis of the North, that I—*per bacco!*—after all, one is inquisitive, too!—that I was seized with a longing to know a woman who, according to all accounts, was

so unique. . . .” He looked at her with a laugh which openly and shamelessly cast aside the mask.

She blushed more deeply and was uncertain whether she did so from anger or pleasure. She cast sidelong glances at the walls of the magic closet. “What is the purpose of all those bottles?”

With a shrug of his shoulders he replied, “When a woman is beautiful, she has many admirers who wait as it were in a queue, and all she need do is to pick out the one that best pleases her. Now my spirit is in those bottles. It stands there in rows and tiers, and waits for me. And according to the mood that moves me, I reach out for one of them. It may be an elixir one day, another day a narcotic.”

The Empress dropped her eyes. In the circumstances she was incapable of continuing the conversation. With a forced smile, and staring in front of her, she said nonchalantly, “Let us drop these tactics, sir. I understand that you wish to leave us. Tell me, can I be of any use to you in the matter?”

In a voice shrill with scorn, but which in its vehemence sounded almost humble, Cagliostro replied: “Your Majesty is wonderful! That is what I call real magic! How could you possibly know that His Majesty the King of Sweden had sent me an invitation by secret courier? Marvellous!”

Catherine grew pale. She did not believe a word he said . . . and yet, the King of Sweden was her mortal enemy! . . . What if Cagliostro were to go to Stockholm and there make her the laughing-stock of Europe! Never yet had she been confronted by such audacity! Here lurked a real danger, or it might become so. She must forestall him. With frigid scorn she drew herself up.

“I regret that you should have to be leaving us so soon, sir. For you have missed one sight that was worth seeing—the dungeons of Schlüßelburg.”

Quite unperturbed Cagliostro thrust out his lips. “I did not even see the dungeons of Mitau. It was a great shame! My collection will not be complete without them.”

"But instead you cast covetous glances on the ducal crown of Courland—that is, if my information is correct. You know the old proverb—crowns can only stand on the solid stones of prison walls?"

"Oh nonsense!" And he shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "Even the leaden chambers of Venice cannot resist a strong will."

Catherine frowned, and a hard gleam entered her eyes. "Have you ever heard of my Siberian mines?"

With a cunning air of innocence, Cagliostro interposed, smiling graciously, "What a curious conversation! We both seem to be specialists in this department. I have heard that Your Majesty once sent a rebellious Cossack against his will to Siberia, and that he came back and almost overthrew the throne. Siberia? It is not a bad place, if one wishes to have quiet nights. And yet it seems to me," and he gave a familiar wink, "that even in the case of Siberia it all depends upon the kind of man you are dealing with, and upon the insolence of his will."

Catherine was alarmed. She had understood the reference to Pugatschow. It had given her enough trouble on that occasion to stifle the mighty conflagration that had been kindled—and yet he had been nothing more than a ragged tramp. She allowed her eyes to flit covertly over the dark wilderness of Cagliostro's face. As for this man, here . . . if ever he escaped. . . .

Her expression grew calm. "When do you propose to go?"

"The first sensible thing you have said!" He drew his chair closer, and looked at her with a friendly smile. "You are a beautiful woman."

"When do you propose to set out on your journey?" She tried to be stern. But what was he doing now? He had been feeling her arm for the last few seconds. Her fairness made her blush appear all the more vivid.

At the same moment Cagliostro leant forward. His expres-

sion was unearthly, but his eyes looked calm and collected. "When Your Majesty pleases."

A short silence lent emphasis to her reply. "I am sorry about it. You are an extraordinary man."

He nodded. Gazing out of the window as though he were lost in thought, he remarked casually: "But all the same, it would be better if Your Majesty were not quite so portly. Perhaps a little massage. . . ." Suddenly he turned to face her.

Was it open disdain? She seemed not to care. What purpose could it serve to rise or remonstrate? "And if you do not go to Sweden?"

Now or never! Standing up, he stepped to the back of the Empress, who had a far away look in her eyes, and seizing her head firmly from behind, pulled it back and gave her a long, long kiss. She did not defend herself.

Suddenly he stepped back, staggered, and almost pushed her from him. Now or never! Potjomkin or I! She shall beg me to stay, and he. . . .

He raised himself to his full height. "I am going!"

Catherine drew a deep breath. She sprang to her feet, and in a moment had recovered her smile. "The Prince is awaiting me."

Cagliostro saw that all was lost. Staring at her fixedly with eyes full of the deepest enmity, he seemed to be taking stock of her. Then dropping into a chair, he said disdainfully, "What a pleasant conversation! Send my wife back to me!"

"Do you mean the Princess di Santa Croce?" The Empress's face was full of profound and mysterious beauty. Her nostrils vibrated slightly. What a man he was! But her instincts had come to a decision. Calm and full of dignity, she stepped up to the Sicilian. "I shall miss you, Cagliostro. But it is best that you should go. Will you allow me at least to. . . ."

His glance fell upon her like a coarse insult. "A female like all of them!"

She stamped her foot feebly. "As you begged me for an

audience, you must have wanted me to do something for you. I can think of various things. Tell me!"

Still sitting down, he looked at her with eyes full of hatred. "The money for my journey, for instance. I have had heavy expenses—and your lover has had all the pleasure."

Catherine closed her lids for a second. She could no longer endure his eyes. They pierced her through like a gimlet. She must make an end of it quickly. "How much do you want, sir?"

"Even rulers are becoming stingy! The whole world is sickening! Thirty thousand silver roubles."

Catherine looked into his face. Was that all? It was all. "You will allow me to offer you one of my own private carriages as a keepsake. Everything will be ready for you in an hour's time." She turned to face him again as she reached the door. He sat there, ugly, lined and bloated, mumbling and snorting defiantly to himself. His face was purple; he was an unpleasant sight. Nevertheless she had never in all her life met anyone like him.

In the passage the chief of police advanced towards her and saluted. In almost threatening tones she hissed, "Go!"

Then taking a deep breath she pressed a hand to her brow. She knew what she had done, and yet now—even for the Russian Crown matters had become difficult.

Lorenza had not seen Potjomkin, and had therefore resolved to wait for him, as he was expected back very soon.

When a few minutes later he greeted her, he looked depressed and preoccupied. Extraordinary things were happening behind his back. The Empress was in St. Petersburg and had not told him of her visit.

Lorenza's report of the episode with Rogerson amused him exceedingly. "I have long wondered why it seems to be his ambition to play the part of doctor. Now that he has been hit perhaps he will turn to more important things." Lorenza did not dare to enquire what Potjomkin meant by "more im-

portant things." Much of what he used to say, with his charming careless smile was incomprehensible if not actually terrifying. But as it was he who said it, it must be right.

Potjomkin was of course quite ready to help his "fat friend", but not before he had had something to eat. There was no hurry about it, and it did Cagliostro all the good in the world to let him kick about a bit. Lorenza agreed to his suggestion that she should sit down to table with him. Neither of them had much to say, and the hearts of both were thumping as though mysterious happenings were making them beat faster. Not even the exquisite warm red Beaujolais could succeed in driving care away. As the clock struck four, the Prince rose in order to call upon Dr. Rogerson. He noticed Lorenza's agitation and begged her tenderly to wait until he returned, so that she might hear from his own lips how he had settled the matter.

He left her. She could hardly suppress a faint cry of pain. He remained standing in the doorway and turned to look at her. Slowly his eyes wandered over her form. She wore a dress the colour of autumn leaves, and it was trimmed with brown fur. His steady understanding eyes took in every detail of the picture—the gold of her hair, the silky shimmer of her skin and the sweetness of her expression. "My heart is so heavy," she whispered. He clasped her once more in his arms, and gave her a long and loving kiss. It was only with great difficulty that he tore himself away.

She stepped to the window. The broad Neva flowed lazily on, steel grey and gloomy beneath the darkening sky. Here and there lamps had already been lighted, and a yellow light gleamed from one or two windows. And oh how low the sky seemed to be, how grey and cold! Wearily Lorenza supported her head in her hand, and peered into the gathering gloom.

A door was opened. The footsteps were not those of the Prince but of a woman. There was a rustle and crackle of silk.

Lorenza sprang to her feet. "Who's there?" A deep warm

contralto voice replied calmly. "The Empress." Lorenza staggered back, her hand clasped to her breast. The end had come.

Two soft and shining hands led her nearer to the window. It was not easy to see anything clearly in the twilight. Lorenza's heart was beating so hard and so painfully that tears all involuntarily filled her eyes. Catherine stroked the Roman girl's beautiful slender shoulders.

"There is no other way, my child." The voice was kind and comforting. The slender shoulders were bowed. "I knew it."

Catherine stroked the tear-stained face. Suddenly Lorenza's quivering lips were on the hand of the Empress. "Your Majesty! . . ."

The Empress drew herself up. "Believe me, it must be so." Her voice was deep and soft. "I don't know what I can say to you. May God bless you and keep you. But now go! go! I cannot bear it any longer."

And Catherine kissed her on the brow.

When a moment later Potjomkin, flustered and annoyed, crossed the darkened room, night had already fallen. In the dim light which filtered into the room from a lamp outside, he could vaguely discern a woman's form that stood out against the window frame. "It looks as if the whole world were conspiring against us, Lorenza. The devil is in it."

A warm contralto voice called to him. "Grigorij. . . ."

Thunderstruck, he remained rooted to the spot. The Empress! She must have met Lorenza. The thought was like a sword piercing his heart. Military fashion, he brought his heels smartly together. "Your Majesty!"

"Yes, Grigorij, it is I. Don't let us talk about it. I am glad to see you looking so well. Come along! My carriage is waiting. We shall dine to-night at *Les Orangers*. It will be a little family party, only the Daschkowa woman and Stroganow, besides ourselves. We shall taste game for the first time this season." Her voice was soft, sad and a little tired. He understood that the end had come, and meekly followed whither

she led. In the light of the candles outside the Empress turned to look at him. His face was grey.

The carriages rattled along, worst after worst, through the darkness and the fine drizzling rain of the autumn night. Benito sat on the box beside the driver, and shivered with cold. To keep himself warm he roared Neapolitan gutter songs between chattering teeth, and beat time with numbed and joyful feet. The attendants at the Hotel had given him heaps of wine to drink when they bade him farewell. They had been dumfounded at the honour conferred upon his master by the Empress, when she had paid him a personal visit. And the princely tip which had been given them when the hotel bill had been settled for the Count out of Her Majesty's private purse, had made them mad with joy.

Benito sniggered when he thought of the sack which had been hauled on to the carriage by two panting porters. It was so heavy, so unspeakably heavy, and it was brimful of beautiful round silver pieces. Oh, what a wonderful man his master was! There would never be another like him in the world.

One of the side windows of the gorgeous and luxuriously appointed coach rattled down, and Cagliostro's raucous voice sounded loud and harsh through the autumn drizzle. "Stop at the next inn. The Countess is not well." Fortunately, there were several good inns along the great Warsaw road, and the carriages pulled up as soon as they reached one. The Countess was carried into the building. For a brief moment Cagliostro stood motionless at the door, and looked bitterly back along the gloomy highway they had just traversed. He heard the sound of a horse's hoofs drawing ever nearer. He listened intently. Growing ever bigger and bigger the silhouette of a rider appeared on the road. Dropping his reins, the rider turned his foam-flecked steed into the yard, and, springing lightly to the ground, stepped up to the lonely Sicilian.

"Count Cagliostro!"

Hoarsely almost angrily, the Count enquired, "Do you come from St. Petersburg?"

The stranger made a secret sign with his fingers. Cagliostro understood and led him aside. "What have you brought me?"

The rider looked darkly at him. "The new instructions and the new route. You will not remain longer than six months with Prince Poninski in Warsaw. Your way lies to the west. It is there you are needed. The hour will soon be ripe for the overthrow of a rotten throne. *Lilium pedibus destrue.*"

Cagliostro gazed at the mysterious stranger in alarm. But the latter continued sternly: "Your will can only become effective if you work with us. We have all the power. The rest depends entirely upon you."

"Who are you?"

"To-day I am one thing, to-morrow another. For you I am—Thomas Ximenez."

"Shall I see you again?"

"When the hour is ripe."

With a hollow sinister laugh the stranger strode over to his horse and dashed out into the night. Utterly bewildered, Cagliostro looked after him. And so it had come at last, this unknown, intangible thing, the spiritual proximity of which he had already so often felt hovering over his life. And so it had come!

In a state of great confusion he stumbled into the warmth of the inn.

Strassburg

IN MARCH of the year 1781 a revolution occurred. It was only an insignificant and trifling revolution in the ancient and firmly established hierarchy of the solar system, but it plunged all the astrologers of the world into the direst confusion; for in this same month, in the 24th degree of the sign Gemini in the Zodiac, a new planet was discovered by Sir Frederick William Herschel of Bath—the planet Uranus, to which the astronomer gave the name of *Sidus Georgium*, in honour of his sovereign. The cool man of science had not the smallest conception of the trouble to which this planet of his was going to lead! Slow as is its journey round the sun—it takes over eighty-three terrestrial years to complete one revolution—and remote as is its orbit in the eternal ether, for it is invisible to the human eye, its sinister and mysterious effects, as even modern astrologists allow, are none the less violent, shattering, unexpected and rapid. And, truth to tell, from the moment when Uranus was discovered on the 13th of March of that year, the doom of the sacred number seven was once and for all sealed, and an era of rebellions and upheavals was inaugurated, which, opening in France, was destined to convulse the whole globe.

That was in March.

The world was now under the peaceful and sunny spell of a beautiful hot summer. The butterflies sported gaily between the neatly clipped yew hedges in the gardens, and the sweet fragrance of white and red roses—Marie Antoinette's favourite flower—was wafted through the open windows of the Archbishop's Palace in Strassburg. In the calm fierce white heat of

midday, no sign was to be seen of the gay life of the Alsatian capital.

In the small white and gold drawing-room of the Archbishop's Palace there sat a little old lady, thin and wizened, dressed in pale lace. She was Baroness Oberkirch and she appeared to be in a state of great excitement and impatience. For eight whole months her beloved Rohan had been away. What a lot of news he would be sure to have for her! She could no longer remain seated in the armchair covered with silk brocade, and rising to her feet, she strode fussily up and down on the soft carpet. At last the Cardinal came in—rosy, good-humoured, and immaculately attired as usual. His loud and pleasant voice drawled a greeting. He looked well. Apparently his travels had not fatigued him in the least.

Prince Louis Renatus, Edouard de Rohan-Guéménée, was only just forty-seven. Nevertheless almost all that a darling of the gods could possibly desire was already at his feet. He was a Cardinal, and titular Bishop of the diocese of Strassburg, the richest see in France. He was a Prince of the realm, as well as Landgrave of Alsace, Abbot of St. Vaast and Chaise Dieu, the fattest benefices in the kingdom, Proviseur of the Sorbonne, a Member of the Academy, Grand Almoner of France, and last but not least, Commander of the Order of the Holy Ghost. Of all his honours and titles, the last was perhaps the one that might least have been inferred from his handsome features.

His features were not only handsome, they were manly. His expression was noble, his face somewhat childish in its rounded smoothness. His fine hair already shone a silvery grey above his clear and lofty brow, while the beautiful curve of his lips betrayed at once the great orator and the great voluptuary. He was very tall and inclined to be portly.

His "handsome Eminence," as he was called by the women, was a great man as the world goes. He may not have been precisely a pillar of the Church, but he was certainly a pillar of the gay, sunny and animated life of the Gallic world. He was distinguished and frivolous, winning and superficial, proud

and indolent, prodigal and charitable—in short just what his sun, which stood in the sign Libra ordained he should be, for this is at once a lovable and a restless sun, ever swinging to and fro, as the sign Libra demands.

The handsome prelate gallantly kissed the hand of the baroness. "We have not seen each other for ages, ever since I left Paris and Versailles in the autumn." He says Versailles, and that means something, was the thought that passed through the inquisitive mind of Baroness Oberkirch. Now she would certainly hear important news. "Monseigneur, you look younger than ever!" she cried ecstatically.

Monseigneur! When addressed by that title it was possible to do a good deal with him. He smiled. "You have probably already heard that Necker has been dismissed?"

She opened her eyes wide in astonishment. "Necker? What a pity! That will only help to increase the general discontent. How unwise! No, I had heard nothing about it." He confirmed the news with a calm shrug of his shoulders. "The whole thing might be traced to the machinations of our friend Breteuil. He is manœuvring in every conceivable way to get to the head of the State." His voice sounded confident, and the baroness ventured to ask: "And what about Monseigneur?"

He shook his head. "Nothing more than the honour, which is my due as Grand Almoner, of being present every day at His Majesty's levee. As for Her Majesty. . . . Heaven knows what pains the Soubise and the Marsan women have taken on my behalf during the last seven years, ever since I returned from Vienna, in fact. But all in vain! Can you understand it, dear baroness?"

She cast her eyes down and murmured: "Breteuil. . . ."

"Oh Breteuil this, and Breteuil that! He makes me laugh!" The Cardinal's bright blue eyes filled with fire. "I know that he would give his soul to see me in the Bastille. As long as Marie Thérèse was alive, he certainly had influence; but now—the young Emperor in Vienna is kindly disposed to me—

aye, he has even been gracious enough to send his exalted sister a hint that she should restore his friend Rohan to favour . . .” and he paused significantly.

“But what about Marie Antoinette? Excuse me, Monseigneur. . . . But what about the Queen?” The eyes of the baroness bulged eagerly. The Cardinal laughed darkly. “Nothing! She does not even condescend to notice me. I am simply not there!”

“And His Majesty the King?”

Rohan pulled a face. “He just gives me a furtive nod at the levee. *Bonjour, mon cousin*, so you are here again? That is all. What can you expect? The fat locksmith has more important matters in his mind than the well-being of the State.”

“Poor France!”

The Cardinal’s fingers beat a march on the arms of his chair. “I have not abandoned all hope, my dear lady. My time will yet come. Meanwhile, let us enjoy the fine weather in gay Strassburg and merry Saverne. Oh, I have all sorts of plans in view. And now tell me all that has happened meanwhile.”

For such a task as this, Baroness Oberkirch had no equal. Engagements, marriages, entanglements, trespasses, temptations, losses and gains—she knew everything, and it all rolled easily from her practised tongue, with exaggerations that betrayed no effort. Rohan listened, highly amused. He knew what a valuable asset Baroness Oberkirch was to him. She was the best newspaper reporter in the whole world—certainly not a reliable and accurate intelligence officer, but for that very reason all the more entertaining as a scandal-monger.

The rich syrupy dark gold Tokay added life to her narrative. “Oh, before I forget, *mon prince*, I must tell you that shortly after your departure, a miracle worker turned up amongst us.”

Laughing indulgently, Rohan replied: “There was no lack of miracle workers in Paris, too. Mesmer is attracting huge crowds, and the Court and all society are thronging round his magnetic bowl. A simple peasant from Dauphiné is able to discover springs a hundred feet below the ground, and conjures

their waters to the surface. Martinists, Theosophists and Philalethes are bringing the most amazing things to light. And there are secret mystic Orders, and hidden sciences, all of which act as antidotes to the materialistic jejuneness of that odious fellow Voltaire!" There was a ring of suppressed rage in the last words.

"Golden words!" the baroness exclaimed approvingly. "Monseigneur's remarks deserve to be taken down."

With boyish melancholy the Prince of the Church enquired the name of the miracle worker.

"Cagliostro!"

He looked up in great excitement. "Oh, I heard about him in Paris. He had an affair with the Empress of Russia, the foolish friend of Voltaire, which was not altogether to her taste. And just imagine, my dear baroness, the crowned turkey-hen is now wreaking her revenge on him by writing silly plays about him. An Empress as a lampoonist! Oh, I must make Cagliostro's acquaintance!" he cried, laughing aloud and coquettishly showing his fine white teeth.

"That will be difficult, Your Eminence. He will only see invalids."

"Is he a doctor then?" The baroness answered cautiously: "He seems to be." A cunning expression entered Rohan's face as he looked at her. "Well then, we shall have to be ill, that's all!"

A footman glided discreetly into the room. "His Reverence, Monsieur l'Abbé!"

Rohan's confidant, his intimate friend and secretary, the Jesuit, Abbé Georgel, entered the room. He was short and thin, his face was slightly tanned, and his cheeks had a bluish glow upon them. He had the reputation of being an extremely capable and alert man, whose cool glance nothing could easily escape. His smooth and friendly manner was but an outward and visible sign of the hard marble, the cold calm and impenetrable stone of his heart.

A faint suggestion of warmth suffused the lifeless features

of the Jesuit, as Rohan gave him a cordial greeting. But the handshake which he exchanged with the baroness was frigid. Rohan smiled. "You are incorrigible, Abbé! You keep the most interesting things from me, as soon as you imagine that they are in any way at variance with the doctrines of the Church. And yet you of all people ought to know, particularly in view of the history of your Order, that our Church is all embracing."

Georgel nodded. "True, your Eminence, and, from the presence of Madame la Baronne, I may perhaps be allowed to infer that you mean Count Cagliostro?"

Rohan acquiesced cheerfully. Glancing maliciously at the Jesuit, the baroness intervened. "Why precisely from my presence?"

The Abbé's answer sounded compassionate. "It is well known that ladies, particularly when they are getting on in years, are intensely interested in anything mystical." The baroness flushed, and blinked angrily. Rohan beamed. He was always in the best of spirits when the baroness was worsted by the icy marble block. With a careless wave of the hand, he enquired: "Who is this Count Cagliostro?"

After a short pause more eloquent than words, the Jesuit replied carelessly: "People are talking about him a good deal. He is said to be very rich, and to have an exceptionally beautiful wife." The baroness regarded the last fact as an encroachment on her preserves, and fidgeting uneasily in her seat she cried: "He lives quite close here, next door to Canon Hüffel on the *Place de la Parade*."

"Really? Incidentally, therefore, to some extent under the protection of the Church. Well, his magic cannot be so very dreadful after all, and Monsieur l'Abbé will find out for his inquisitive Cardinal when he can pay a visit to the miracle worker." Thereupon Georgel calmly proceeded to relate what people were saying about Cagliostro's extraordinary cures, his munificence, and the numbers of his patients, which more than once had numbered over five hundred persons in one day.

The Cardinal listened with kindly curiosity, which almost broke the heart of the baroness. Flushing hotly, she was obliged to interpose: "And he has also cured the Marquis de la Salle's secretary."

"Little fair-haired Pierre? I did not even know he was ill." With an air of great importance, the baroness continued: "He had gangrene; his own doctor had given him up; he only had another twenty-four hours to live. At the request of the Marquis, Cagliostro took the youth in hand, and restored him to health. And to-day he has already been able to give up his crutches."

The Cardinal simpered. "A miracle indeed! And what else can he do?"

"He is a Grand Master of the Freemasons," exclaimed the baroness. Rohan pulled a face. "That savours of revolution! I am afraid I understand nothing about that." But the Baroness continued hastily: "And he is said to possess an amazing knowledge of alchemy. He knows the secret of converting little diamonds into great big ones!"

The Cardinal gazed thoughtfully at her. "The deuce he does! I wonder what good old Boehmer would say to that?"

"Boehmer?"

With a shrug of his shoulders Rohan replied: "A Saxon Jew and His Majesty's Court jeweller. He has just made a wonderful diamond necklace, which is supposed to have cost two million francs, and which no one will buy. Even our beautiful Queen, Marie Antoinette, cannot afford it. That shows how poor kings have become."

There was a pause. Laughing merrily, Rohan added: "By means of his art Cagliostro could make each diamond in the necklace so large that Monseieur Boehmer would be able to dispose of them one at a time at a gigantic profit. Then he would no longer need to implore His Majesty on bended knee for permission to drown himself in the Seine, because the necklace which he cannot sell is ruining him. Quite between ourselves, the necklace was made to adorn the bewitching neck

of Madame du Barry, who in the meanwhile has become—er—what do they call it—well, let us say a widow.” He laughed good-naturedly. The baroness shook her little finger reproachfully at him. The Abbé sat there as if he knew nothing whatever about it.

“Baron de Planta!” announced a footman at the door. The Cardinal rose and hastened towards the man who was his other intimate friend, and greeted him. “So here I am again, my dear Planta,” he said. “It is nice of you to have come at once. How are things in my beloved Saverne? I shall be going over there in a fortnight. Oh, I have great plans in my mind for Saverne; you’ll be astonished.” He checked himself and winked at Georgel.

The Jesuit crept noiselessly up to his master and Rohan whispered in his ear: “Go and call on Cagliostro quite soon. You understand what I mean?”

The Abbé bowed and smiled.

On the following morning, when the handsome prelate, as he had long been in the habit of doing, installed himself at the corner window looking out on the stately Place de Parade, to drink his morning chocolate and watch the passers-by in the street below, a sight met his eyes which he had never before beheld in Strassburg. A huge crowd of people of all ages was surging in front of a house almost opposite to where he was sitting. He noticed not only that it consisted chiefly of poorly-clad people, but also that many of them were hobbling on crutches. Their cries could be heard right inside the Palace, and when the Cardinal asked a footman what the cause of the disturbance was, he was informed that the wonder-working doctor lived there. Deeply interested, Rohan leant forward: “Cagliostro?”

“Count Cagliostro is what he calls himself, your Eminence.”

An hour later, when the Prince was taking his customary morning outing, he noticed a sight so unfamiliar in the streets of Strassburg, that he ordered his carriage to be stopped. It was a beautiful fair woman, riding wonderfully erect on a black

mare of the noblest Arab breed. Her eyes had a serene expression, her mouth was closed in an ironical smile, and her lips were so red that they might almost have been painted. She was slim, but withal so sweetly womanly that no man could look at her without feeling his heart beat faster. Her riding habit was simple and yet so elegant that it was in itself almost a provocation.

An actress! was the Cardinal's first thought—or a demi-mondaine!

Behind her, on a piebald horse, there followed a groom with slanting slits of eyes, who rode abominably; but, as though to make up for it, his uniform was so richly embroidered with gold that it was dazzling to behold. As they rode by, the lady vouchsafed the Cardinal no sign of recognition, thereby proving that she was a stranger in Strassburg. He observed her covertly. She rode splendidly, and from her bearing it was clear that she must be a woman of fashion. Abbé Georgel, who was sitting opposite the Cardinal, smiled a cool, sarcastic smile.

"Who was that?" Rohan enquired.

"Countess Cagliostro," replied the Jesuit.

Had not the mysterious stranger, on that rainy night outside St. Petersburg distinctly informed Cagliostro that his stay in Warsaw would not last longer than six months? He had been right. The recollection of that prophecy, which had been made two years ago, suddenly occurred to the Sicilian on that summer's day in lovely Strassburg, and insisted upon monopolising his attention. And lo, here was comfort-loving Giuseppe Balsamo, who cared nothing for the marvels of Art and Nature, unless they could be made to serve the purpose of his own highly personal marvels, Giuseppe Balsamo, who hated to be alone for a single moment—here he was, deep in thought, toiling up the seven hundred and twenty-five steps which led to the top of the cathedral tower. True he was covered with perspiration and gave vent to a mild expletive; nevertheless he con-

tinued to mount step by step, so that from that lofty height he might abandon himself to even loftier meditations.

Beware lest thou act too rashly, my son! Ponder things well, Giuseppe, my lad! No blunders this time! Thus did the thoughts revolve in his mind, as he gazed from the highest window of the tower.

It was not without certain qualms that he peered into the depths. The people in the streets looked like little ants, and the whole city seemed as if it could be encircled with a yard-measure. The neighbouring villages were hardly recognisable, and over ten miles away he could discern the blue outlines of the mountains. High above dear mother earth he hung suspended there, the silent solitary bell of his own power, whose deafening chimes would one day roll like thunder over the whole world.

The mysterious Spaniard, Ximenez, had not returned, and the riddle of the mystic rider was still unsolved. But he had proved right. The sojourn at Warsaw had lasted only five months, and had culminated in a hasty retreat such as had terminated all his other star performances. The Master had, as usual, attempted an unexpected little trick of his own, whereupon, as seemed to be his fate, there had arisen from among his crowd of enthusiastic disciples, an abandoned Judas, against whose wicked intrigues there was only one possible means of defence—a hurried escape.

On this occasion, however, the travelling funds had been fairly plentiful. For not only had Catherine's tightly packed money-bag not been touched at Prince Poninski's castle, but substantial additions had been made to it in Warsaw, with the result that he was now comfortable for life. Nevertheless the fat little man was not satisfied; for as yet he could see no signs that his power had increased. His reputation, on the other hand, had spread by leaps and bounds; for, no matter where he made an appearance now, his fame always seemed to have preceded him. But neither money nor fame amounted to real power.

Urged on towards Rome by a desire which he felt to be the greatest wish of his heart, he had endeavoured, after turning his back on Warsaw, to go southwards, but had deemed it inadvisable to leave the road the mysterious Freemason had pointed out to him. "Your way lies to the west. That is where you are needed," had been the enigmatic words of the Freemason. "*Lilium pedibus destrue.*"

Cagliostro had barely had time to warm his hands in Venice when he had been obliged to flee with all possible speed, for he had been recognised by certain witnesses of a somewhat discreditable Spanish adventure, which it was true had occurred many years before. *Corpo di bacco!* He shuddered when he thought of it.

Thus, compelled, as it were, by force of circumstances, he had been obliged to wend his way westward, and had come to a stop in Strassburg nine months previously. Once again he was playing the magnificent rôle he had assumed in St. Petersburg, though perhaps not on quite such a grand scale. His acts of charity were confined to free consultations and cheap portions of broth. But they answered just as well. In any case his expenses were heavier, for he had greatly increased his suite. He now had a footman in addition to Benito, Lorenza had a maid, and there was also a so-called secretary, a learned doctor who had fallen on evil days, whom he had picked up in Venice. He had made the man a sort of assistant, though without initiating him into his secrets. Cagliostro was now better able to make accurate diagnoses, and without further ado he invariably left all the more difficult cases to the Venetian, who idolised him as though he were a superior being. Thus he had not found it difficult, even among the more sceptical people of the west, to pass himself off as a famous doctor.

Now, however, he seemed to be on the eve of a decisive change in his life.

As he stood, deep in thought, on the mighty tower, higher than the cathedral chimes, aye, almost as high as the clouds, and looked out upon the summer landscape, his great idea once

again began to take shape in his mind. He was in need of a prince of the Church. And lo, here was Rohan! No one was better fitted than the Prince Cardinal. He united temporal and spiritual power in his own person, he was fabulously rich, and he was, moreover, interested in Botany, Chemistry and Alchemy. A Prince, a high dignitary of the Church, a dabbler in occult science—and a hero with the ladies . . . Rohan was his man!

Was it not strange? At this great height he was conscious, in addition to a sensation of giddiness, of a feeling that the line of the horizon, almost lost to sight in the blue distance, was curved slightly upwards, so that the whole of the visible surface at his feet assumed the appearance of a huge plate. It was a plate in the centre of which Strassburg lay like a rich cake, and in the cake itself was the plum which he greedily longed to gulp down.

Suddenly the bells of the cathedral began to ring for vespers, deep bells and shrill bells. Whereupon the other bells of the city chimed in. But he, the loftiest and rarest bell of all, fell on one fat knee, and above the uproar about him rang out his brazen song of the eternity of human inventiveness, drawn from the soil of man's will, boiled over the fire of genius, and cooled in the sagacious waters of divination.

When at last the bells ceased to ring, he rose, and with a firm tread descended the steps of the tower. Now he knew his mission, and must make all the necessary preparations. They were by no means elaborate. A skilled moulder of fortune opens the dance of his destiny without much ado.

With measured step he entered his old familiar magic closet. Paying no heed to Benito, who, breathless and agitated, was waiting to tell him something, he went to the window, and seating himself in a large armchair upholstered in black velvet, called for something to drink. His favourite beverage at the moment was cognac flavoured with black coffee. He partook of this the livelong day, and thus the rumour had spread that he lived solely upon coffee and Italian pastries, while there

was also a widespread belief among his supporters that he either never slept, or at most took a nap on a couch without undressing. The light in his magic closet was never put out at night. This was Benito's task, and he would have been severely beaten if he had ever forgotten to fill the lamp with oil.

Benito was very happy in Strassburg. He could read from his master's expression that he was preparing a great plan of campaign—and, confound it all! he knew very well, that the *mæstro* could carry out anything he had determined upon in the very best Palermo style. *Santo porco!* There would be another fine old imbroglio, a nice mess of potage teeming with thousands of savoury and dangerous ingredients which would burn one's tongue.

Cagliostro took a deep draught of his mixture, and struck Benito a friendly blow on the shoulder which would have felled an ox. "Now we are going to make things hum, you young rascal!" Utterly bewildered the ox picked himself up. "In what way, sir?" The Master grunted contentedly. "I can tell from your expression that he was here a moment ago."

Surely there was some touch of the divine in him; he was not altogether of the Evil One. Nevertheless Benito's first thought was to pour a little water into his master's drink. "Not himself, sir, it wasn't he himself, but. . . ."

"Ah, you blockhead! What will you say next? He was not here himself, wasn't he? Do you imagine, you hopeless fathead, you cross between a bottle of gin and a guttersnipe, that he would be so besotted as to come himself? You ox! Do you take me for a mangy Neapolitan of your own lousy breed, that I should not know precisely who was here?"

In an attitude of worship Benito sank to the floor. His lord and master knew it! He stammered: "He promised to call again during the course of the day." The iron chin snarled coldly: "They are in a hurry!" and returned to his bottle.

For a moment there was silence. Dusk began to fall. Benito brought in some candles and their light played fitfully on the hundred and one white flasks and crystal bottles in the magic

closet. "What's happening over there?" Cagliostro suddenly enquired.

"The Countess took her ride this morning as usual, and shortly before you returned, Master, the Countess Lorenza went to the cathedral for Mass." The fat little man's eyes grew dim. Yes, that was all as it should be. While he, the free son of his mighty star was up in the tower, she, the slave, was praying down in the twilight of the great cathedral! He laughed grimly. Besides, in this city she had no comforter, no Serene Highness! Lorenza had hardly vouchsafed a glance at the fashionable young Poles who had paid her such ardent court—Grzewuski, Czartoryski, Poninski, etc. She still seemed to have thoughts for no one, save her great St. Petersburg friend who, forsooth, she must really have loved. Cagliostro dug his nails angrily into his hands, and laughed a wooden laugh. But that was all over and done with!

The bell rang. "Show him in!" roared the Sicilian, and sank more deeply into his armchair.

With every sign of respect Benito admitted the slender priest, who was smiling courteously. In his black cassock he advanced towards Cagliostro. The latter rose slowly to his feet, swelling visibly, and in calm and businesslike tones enquired: "Well, what does Cardinal Rohan want of me? What is the matter with him, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

Georgel had not expected such a reception, and for a moment Cagliostro's words robbed the cool Jesuit of his assurance. He remained rooted to the spot, and looked straight at Cagliostro. And his look determined the relations of the two men to each other for the rest of their acquaintance. Carefully measuring their opponent's strength and weakness, they faced each other like two wrestlers. The Abbé felt that, for the moment, he could rely only on the human cunning of the serpent, for the shrewd Jesuit was confronted by a fighter who filled him with awe. Whether he were a thief and a pickpocket or not, he was at least every inch a *man*.

He gave a discreet bow. "I am delighted that your lord-

ship's insight should have spared me the trouble of introducing myself. Truth to tell his Eminence has charged me to beg your lordship to be so good as to honour him with a visit."

Cagliostro shook his head violently, and gave a deprecating wave of his hand. "If the Cardinal is ill he may come that I may cure him. But if he is quite well, as I devoutly hope, he needs me as little as I need him."

The Abbé smiled involuntarily; he knew what the Prince would say to this reply. "I will tell his Eminence what you say; but I fear he will be far from satisfied."

It was Cagliostro's turn to smile, and inviting the Jesuit to be seated, he also took a chair. With a jovial wink he asked the priest whether he could not like something to drink. Georgel, pointing to his cloth, declined with thanks. Cagliostro laughed aloud and good-naturedly. "But I only meant coffee!" The Jesuit also laughed. That was certainly another matter; he would gladly drink a small cup of coffee. Proudly the Sicilian rejoined: "You will have the best cup of coffee in the world. I will make it myself."

With pontifical solemnity he set about this sacred task in the room in which they were sitting. As he was thus engaged, the Jesuit's eyes followed him in astonishment, and a vague presentment of what lay concealed within the fat mysterious count obsessed him and filled him with uneasiness.

When the china pot stood on the table with its steaming brown liquor faintly perfuming the air, Cagliostro turned to his guest. "Will you allow me to introduce my wife to you?" And he rang a silver bell. Benito appeared. "Ask the Countess to be so good as to join us."

As was his wont, the Abbé held his head a little to one side, and looked benevolently at the Sicilian. Although he could not fathom his intentions, the very fact that he had some object in view was in itself pleasantly stimulating. Meanwhile Cagliostro was inveighing with lively emphasis against the stupidity of the world in general and of those authors in particular who regarded him, the Freemason and Hermetic, as a tool of the

Jesuits, and frequently upheld this view in newspapers and periodicals. The priest listened with a smile to the ironic threnody. Yes, he too had more than once heard similar rumours, and certain Berlin writers had been particularly notorious in sounding this note. The two men laughed heartily. They knew the object of these insinuations, whereby the originators of them hoped not only to injure the reputation of the Order of Jesus, and prevent Cagliostro from making any headway, but also expected to win for themselves the reputation of intrepid pioneers.

Benito opened the door for the Countess to enter. Lorenza kissed the priest's hand. Ah, a devout Catholic! thought the Abbé, as he cast a covert glance at Cagliostro, who was watching the little scene with the kindly expression of a benevolent parent. Clearing his throat he said carelessly, "I felt certain, my dear child, that it would give you pleasure to meet a priest, particularly as Monsieur l'Abbé belongs to the Society of Jesus."

Lorenza quietly took a seat. "I am pleased to see your Reverence," she said, "for I have many questions to ask you." With a smile Cagliostro returned to his seat, folded his hands serenely across his belly, and began to twiddle his thumbs. Then turning his head slowly towards the Jesuit, he enquired with slightly tempered truculence, "What do you think of astrology, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

"Truth to tell, not much, your lordship. Though I cannot say that I have ever gone very deeply into the question." Calm and crushing was the rejoinder. "You have made a great mistake, Monsieur l'Abbé. The greatest minds have applied themselves to this science—aye, and many a Pope among them. How would it be if the Countess were to initiate you into the science? She is an extremely able and gifted authority on the subject, and has advanced far beyond the empirical stage."

The Jesuit looked in astonishment at the charming and quietly dressed figure. "Fancy such a dark and secret science being contained in so bright and beautiful a head!" In soft warm

tones Lorenza replied, without the smallest trace of confusion in her voice: "Truth to tell, your Reverence, my husband is right, although he is exaggerating. I have only been working at it for the last two years, and have not got very far."

"And may I enquire what your reason is for concerning yourself with such matters?" The Jesuit's voice was friendly and free from curiosity.

"Every heart that has strayed from the strait and narrow way has need of support and comfort. And there is much comfort to be found from a knowledge of the pitiless rule of law among the stars." They were silent. Then cautiously the Abbé asked her: "And what of the Grace of God, Who sent His Son as Mediator for our sins?" Calmly, monotonously, well-nigh mechanically, Lorenza replied: "Grace, your Reverence? I know of no grace on earth."

Shocked by what he had heard, the Abbé Georgel contemplated the young woman's sad blue eyes. Whereupon springing to his feet, he exclaimed, "I hope, Countess, that you will fulfil your words and ask me many questions." She gave him her hand, and he pressed it kindly and firmly. Cagliostro, in the best of spirits, accompanied him to the door. Lorenza could not have carried it off more skillfully! This was indeed water for his mill. It came at a most opportune moment. For if only there was water, the mill would begin to chatter, and—well, chattering was part of his stock-in-trade.

Georgel was right. Cagliostro's refusal to receive the Cardinal made a deep impression upon Rohan, and he was more than ever anxious to make the magician's acquaintance, particularly as during the last few days two new and entirely contradictory rumours had been spread about him.

Madame Angeard, a beautiful Parisian society woman, whose husband was a Farmer General of Taxes and incidentally immensely wealthy, had fallen victim to a mysterious illness, and had left Paris for Strassburg with the express purpose of consulting Cagliostro. For years she had been trying one cure after another without success, but no sooner did Cagliostro look her

steadily in the eyes and send her off into a magnetic sleep, than her illness vanished. And now she was enthusiastically singing her benefactor's praises in every quarter of the town. As she was a great beauty, malicious tongues did not hesitate to add details to her story, which were not altogether compatible with strict morality. For at this time rumours began to be current regarding Cagliostro's strange relations with women, and names were whispered which were likely to create a stir. In connection with these rumours a mystico-erotic ray of light was even believed to emanate from the Imperial Crown of Russia.

But the second rumour was of a much more painful nature. People had heard from Cagliostro's own lips that he was the Grand Master of the Lodge of Perfect Wisdom in Medina. He must, therefore, be able to speak Arabic fluently; and indeed he had declared that he was more at home with Arabic than with any other language. Now the knowledge of this had reached the ears of a certain Swede, Professor Norberg of Upsala, who had been commissioned by the Swedish Government to go to the East with the object of prosecuting certain investigations. On his way thither he had come to Strassburg in order to consult some University Professors. As Professor Norberg spoke Arabic, but had never yet met an Arabic scholar, he eagerly presented himself to Cagliostro, and straightway addressed him in that language. Cagliostro, however, it was maintained, had merely stared blankly at him open-mouthed without understanding a word, and had not even been aware that the Professor was speaking Arabic. It is true the Master had subsequently explained that Norburg had used a dialect which had long since been forgotten, having become obsolete hundreds of years before his time. What was the truth? Arabia was far away, and the box on the ears which charming Madame Angeard administered to the tactless Professor when, in her presence, he had dared to make fun of the great idol, could hardly be regarded as a contribution to the elucidation of the mystery. Opinions veered this way and that; the newspapers

began to get busy over the incident, but Cagliostro's prestige increased notwithstanding.

On one of his daily drives in the city the Cardinal again witnessed a strange scene. Followed by an army of gutter-snipes and idlers, who cheered him repeatedly, a short, square-built, portly man was crossing the market-place. His face resembled that of a cheerful bulldog, and his clothes glistened with diamonds and gold. Contrary to the fashion of the day, which was becoming less formal, his hair was powdered, and plaited in a pig-tail. He held his head proudly back, so that his mighty chin stood out prominently. In one hand he bore a musketeer hat, trimmed with a white plume, a form of head-gear which, according to police regulations was confined to druggists, and dentists, and such persons, and might not be worn by those holding the learned degrees of a doctor of medicine, or of any approved therapeutic body. The Abbé Georgel laid a hand lightly on the knee of the Cardinal who sat opposite him and was watching the scene with great interest. "That is Cagliostro, Monseigneur!"

The Prince immediately ordered his carriage to be stopped, and springing out into the road, strode, accompanied by the Abbé, towards Cagliostro. Reverently the crowd made way for him. But the figure continued on his way, as though he had no wish to notice the two men, and went strolling on. Whereupon the Cardinal called out to him. "Count Cagliostro! Wait a moment. There are two of us here who would like to shake your hand."

Cagliostro stood still and frowned disapprovingly at them. But when his eye caught the Jesuit's he immediately burst into smiles of recognition. "Oh, Monsieur l'Abbé, how pleased I am to see you!" It was clearly a painful ordeal for the Abbé to find his hand being taken first, and he only began to breathe more freely when the Cardinal, observing the conflict in his secretary's soul, benevolently came to his rescue. "You certainly declined my invitation, sir," he said, "but I am importunate, and now approach you in person."

The Sicilian gave a significant nod, and held out a hand to him, which Rohan immediately seized. "Are you also aware, sir, that I am one of your admirers?" the Prince enquired affably, looking straight into Cagliostro's eyes.

The mysterious Count calmly looked away from him, and murmured, "Too soon!" A moment later, however, he fastened his gaze steadily on the Prince's face and snarled: "You are very impulsive, *mon prince*. If I am not mistaken your star rises in the sign of the Archer, a distinctly theological sign; but it also denotes a capacity for riding, hunting and other favourite exercises of the upper classes." The last words rang out like the cry of a showman at a fair.

Completely taken aback the Prince of the Church looked at him, and Cagliostro, making a grimace with his huge mouth, exclaimed with a loud laugh: "And now that I have satisfied the first pangs of your curiosity, I am ready to fulfil your wish, Monseigneur, and accompany you for a short drive. Farewell, Monsieur l'Abbé!" And with a curt nod, he stepped over to the carriage. Completely stupefied, the Cardinal followed him. The extraordinary stranger had actually divined his thoughts. Silently they took their places and the carriage bowled away. With a shake of his head, Monsieur l'Abbé stood gazing after it.

The drive sealed the bond of friendship between Rohan and Cagliostro. On reaching home the Cardinal related his impressions to his faithful Georgel. "The face of that inaccessible man radiates such power that I was filled with veritable religious awe. Unfortunately our conversation did not last long, and I am now more than ever anxious to learn something further about him. Pray inform him that I should be glad if he would kindly honour me with a visit to-morrow afternoon."

The Abbé nodded in silence. He guessed what would happen.

And he was right. Barely a fortnight had elapsed before Cagliostro became a daily visitor at the palace, until at last, one fine evening, the Prince invited him to accompany him to Saverne on the following day.

Saverne lay to the north-west, in the hills on the edge of the

Vosges. The palace, which was the ordinary residence of the Bishop of Strassburg, was a magnificent building. Rohan showed his guest his fine collection of specimens connected with physical science and natural history, and the wonderful library of luxuriously bound books which bore the Cardinal's arms in gold, with the inscription, *Ex bibliotheca Sabernensis*. He also conducted him over the castle, and they spent hours over the old prayer-books and missals collected by the Cardinal, because he disliked holding badly printed works in his hand at divine service. Among them were priceless manuscript breviaries, with beautiful illuminations picked out in vermilion and gold.

Suddenly Cagliostro uttered a cry. He was standing in front of a huge crucifix carved in wood, and was contemplating it with deep emotion. "That is not anything very extraordinary," declared the Cardinal, coming up to him; and he was astonished to see a tear rolling down his companion's face. "What is the matter?" he enquired sympathetically.

"It is He, oh, in very truth it is He! Oh, I can hardly believe it! What a speaking likeness! He might have sat as a model for it. How was it possible for a woodcarver, who never saw Him face to face, to produce such a staggering likeness!" And, as he spoke, he passed his finger reverently over the crucifix.

"Whom do you mean?" the Cardinal asked in great excitement.

"I mean Him who was crucified!" came the solemn reply.

"But that sounds almost as if you. . . ." Rohan stammered.

Gravely Cagliostro interrupted him. "Yes, I knew Him. . . . How often used we to pace up and down the wet sands on the shores of the Lake of Tiberias together! I can still hear His voice ringing in my ears. How unspeakably gentle and mild it was! Why wouldst Thou not listen to my appeals, my gentle Friend?" His voice was choked with sobs. With the back of his hand he brushed his tears away, and continued angrily: "Instead of which, when we parted, He rambled about the shores of the lake, and collected a motley crew of lazzaroni

round him, fishermen and ragamuffins. And then He preached to them thoughts they did not understand. Alas, He paid heavily enough for it all!"

As if crushed by the burden of his memories, he dropped limply into a chair, and covered his face with his hands. He was breathing heavily.

At first the Cardinal had stepped back in horror. But now he drew nearer to him, almost transfigured by the depth of his sympathy, and solemnly made the sign of the cross over his head.

Cagliostro stretched out a hand to him, and looked deep into his eyes. The Cardinal was able to meet the superhuman power of his dark and fiery gaze. Whereupon Cagliostro rose and embraced him. "You are the only man on earth who deserves to be the confidant of my secrets!"

This was Rohan's hour of triumph. A brotherly kiss sealed the bond uniting them. And by the light of a wonderful sunset the two drove back to Strassburg.

They now became inseparable, for Rohan wanted his friend to be constantly at his side. An accident greatly favoured the progress of their friendship. Rohan had received a letter from his cousin, the Prince de Soubise, whose secretary had been attacked by gangrene and all hope had been abandoned by the doctors. Now Soubise had heard tell of Cagliostro's marvellous cures, and begged Rohan to persuade him to come to Paris to heal the unfortunate young man. This Cagliostro agreed to do.

Strange memories haunted his mind as he approached the great city. How many wretched, thoroughly wretched hours had he not spent within its walls! He thought of those days when Lorenza had forsaken him, and he had only found her again with the help of the police. Oh, Paris! But he knew how he would wreak his revenge on her. He would conquer the gay city. She was his fate. His very blood told him so.

Even Rohan who sat beside him was throbbing and seething with excitement. But he had not as yet dared to reveal his

greatest secret to his friend. He was thinking of that fateful 8th of May, eleven years previously, when as a tall slim young man he had welcomed the fair young Dauphiness at the portals of the Cathedral of Strassburg, in order to bless the first steps she took on French soil. An exquisite pang had pierced his heart—Marie Antoinette, the fair and haughty young princess, had secured her first victim.

On arriving in Paris the two friends alighted at the magnificent Hôtel Rohan, in the Rue Vieille du Temple, which was popularly called the "Maison de Strasbourg." A large garden separated it from the Palais Soubise.

As the medical Faculty had not yet pronounced the case incurable, Cagliostro refused to undertake the treatment, in order that he might not be accused of claiming the cure of a patient of whom he had not had the entire charge. The most he would agree to do was to accompany the Cardinal to the house and see the young man.

On returning home Cagliostro and the Cardinal immediately repaired to the large ebony-panelled study, through whose lofty windows, leading out on to the garden, a view of the Palais Soubise could be obtained. Pushing a large and comfortable armchair up to the window, he silently dropped into it. At the Palais Soubise he had laid a silk cloth over the invalid's head, muttered a few incomprehensible words, and then replaced the silk cloth in his pocket. He now spread this cloth on his knees and begged the Cardinal to be silent. Whereupon, with eyes bulging ever more and more, he stared at the fine silken fabric, and gave vent to strange guttural sounds as if he were muttering to himself, and with his fingers outspread, and his arm out of the window, described magic hieroglyphics in the air. At the end of about half an hour, he leant back exhausted; the perspiration poured in streams down his ferocious features, he panted: "In twenty-four hours we shall know for certain. I shall not be needed any more now."

Spellbound—nay, almost paralysed with wonder, the Cardinal had watched the whole proceeding. But in the evening, when

the news came that the invalid was feeling much better, Rohan insisted on bearing the news of the miracle into the world himself.

All Paris now flocked to the Maison de Strasbourg, and Cagliostro was kept busy from morning to night by the crowds of inquisitive and ailing folk who thronged to see him. When the two friends took their departure a fortnight later, the name of Cagliostro shone through Paris like a new star of salvation, risen to shed light upon the world's darkness. All Paris escorted them on their way and numbers of people followed the wonder-worker as far as Strassburg, in order to enjoy his illustrious presence, and continue cures which had already been begun. Among them were many high dignitaries and lovely women. It was a magnificent procession.

How shrewd Cagliostro had become! He would accept no money; he curtly refused all presents. But he was spared the trouble of making these facts known to the world, for he now had an illustrious attendant who undertook to spread every item of news with all the requisite dash and energy. Meanwhile in Versailles a certain superstitious young Queen who loved life, leant an eager and willing ear to all such pieces of intelligence—which must surely be to the advantage of Rohan, who had fallen from grace; for his name was inextricably connected with the glorious name of Cagliostro.

Cagliostro was well pleased. He knew that the beautiful pleasure-loving Austrian princess was already twenty-six and a mother, and that she was becoming concerned about the freshness of her youth and beauty. He was also pleased, because he knew that a certain charming little rumour had reached her ears, which he himself had carefully fashioned in grace and seductiveness and started flying through the air.

It was to the following effect: That vain old dandy, the Duke of —— had made Cagliostro's acquaintance in Madrid six years previously. He had heard that the Master possessed the only genuine rejuvenating water, and continued to pester him until at last Cagliostro let him have a small bottle of it—a phial

bearing the inscription: "Water for reducing age by twenty-five years." Now the Duke's wife, the beautiful Ines, was just thirty, and one day when her husband was out, she decided—for like all females she was inquisitive—to taste some of the water, and she found it so delicious that she emptied the bottle to the last drop. But what was the result? The young woman's limbs immediately began to shrink, her head and body grew visibly smaller, until at last the inquisitive duchess was transformed into a tiny child of five, who was completely swallowed up in the clothes of the woman which she had been wearing not a quarter of an hour previously. When the duke came home he immediately went to his wife, for the first drops of rejuvenating water which he had taken had already worked their effect. But what were his feelings when his beautiful Ines, her face streaming with tears, and hopelessly entangled in her clothes, came staggering towards him like a little toy doll. And thus it came about that the duke was deprived of both his wife and the rejuvenating water; for Cagliostro refused to give any more of the elixir to people who took such little care of it, and he had no water for the increasing of age.

All Paris was discussing this tale which the Master had allowed to escape from him one evening between two glasses of Canary. Regeneration!—that had become the favourite word of the prematurely senile nobility—Regeneration and Cagliostro! Mesmer, already half forgotten, sat before his empty coffers and mourned the past.

Cagliostro, however, with Rohan at his side, had driven back to Strassburg escorted by dozens of magnificent gala coaches. On the way Rohan suggested to him that he should move to Saverne and live with him there. Cagliostro hesitated and was far from gracious, but at last he gave his consent. The Cardinal beamed with joy. Now he had a secure hold upon the immortal Master. Now, with the immortal Master at his side, his return to Versailles would one day be realised.

The move to Saverne was postponed a while, owing not only to the crowd of Parisians who had followed Cagliostro,

but also to the fact that the Freemasons of Strassburg, after the Master's recent successes, were more than ever insistent in their entreaties that he should found an Egyptian Lodge—nay, there was even some mention of a so-called "Adoption Lodge."

Cagliostro refused. He told them angrily that he wished to have nothing to do with Strassburg, for the doctors, disgusting swine that they were, had presented a petition to the Town Commandant, the Marquis de la Salle, requesting him to evict his lordship, Count Cagliostro, because, with his nostrums and cures, which were not approved by science, and the value of which was in any case extremely dubious, he interfered with their profession. Such was the petition which these skunks and carrion crowds had presented. Of course it would not lead to anything, but it had upset him so much that he had resolved to turn his back on Strassburg. "Did Paracelsus, I should like to know, abide by the precepts and rules of these blockheads?" he yelled. "Had he not also been persecuted in his day?"

And now everything was conspiring to placate the wrathful Master. The Freemasons became feverishly active; Cagliostro's disciples, especially the women, began to sing his praises in every key; in Paris Count de Vergennes, the Prime Minister, proclaimed from the house-tops that the laws of humanity demanded that such a great man should be respected and not harassed; and the Town Commandant, the Marquis de la Salle, actually flung Dr. Ostertag, the delegate from the medical fraternity, out of the house. Nay, one fertile brain actually opened a subscription list for the purpose of raising funds for building a Lodge, with the sole object of giving the Master a pleasant surprise.

Strassburg was bubbling with excitement, and good Baroness Oberkirch was completely beside herself. So she went to call upon her beloved Cardinal. The first object that caught her eye as she entered the great and somewhat austere reception room with its cold white walls and uncomfortable Gothic furniture, was a marble bust, which apparently the Prince had

only recently had installed. The baroness could not remember having seen it before. The bust was that of a ferocious-looking man, with head well thrown back in an attitude of haughty pride. His brow was broad, his face square, and his eyes deep-set, whilst he had a huge imperious chin. On the base of it, in golden letters, she read: *The Divine Cagliostro*.

Uneasily she tripped up and down in front of the bust, her mind a prey to thoughts that were anything but cheerful. At last the Cardinal appeared. She advanced nervously and with a mincing step towards him, and noticed that he looked in the best of spirits.

Dropping ceremoniously on her knees she kissed the Bishop's ring. With a friendly smile the Prince helped her to rise. "But really, my dear Baroness, why all this ceremony between two such old friends?" And he was obliged almost to use violence to make her sit down on one of the hard armchairs. Her narrow head wagged a little more than usual and her eyes, as round as cherries, were riveted on the marble bust.

Rohan noticed this. "How do you like the bust?" he asked her with a smile.

"Your new passion, your Eminence? I have heard people talking about it." The baroness's voice was as sharp as the point of a needle.

"It strikes me you have something against Cagliostro," he broke in with a laugh.

"Truth to tell, *mon prince*, I know of no such person as Count Cagliostro. The name is either quite new or . . . it is made up." The Cardinal's eyes still smiled, although his voice sounded grave. "He is my friend, Baroness, or, if you will, my master."

Turning her blazing eyes upon him, she retorted frigidly: "Your Eminence is well known as a man who easily gets enthusiastic about things. But—master? How can a Freemason be the master of a Prince of the Church? Or has your Eminence forgotten the Bull against Freemasonry?"

Rohan yawned. "My dear Baroness, you forget that Egyp-

tian Freemasonry has nothing whatever to do with the kind of Freemasonry which has been known hitherto, and which has been condemned by the Church! Cagliostro reveres our Church no less than we do."

But the pious baroness was not easily convinced. She shook her head violently, "I regard him as suspicious all the same. It says little for his habits of life that he is always surrounded by women, particularly elderly women. Moreover, he is a free-thinker, like the rest of the Freemasons, infected with the infernal doctrines of Voltaire. Whatever your Eminence may say to the contrary, he is a free-thinker and a revolutionary. I have heard that your Eminence proposed to subscribe to the collection which is being made on Cagliostro's behalf by the Freemasons. I pray for the salvation of your Eminence's soul!"

Rohan now began to lose his temper. "You are putting our friendship to a very severe test, my dear lady. I thank you for praying for the salvation of my soul, although at the present moment it is in no greater danger than it was before. Cagliostro a revolutionary? Absurd! Then I also am a revolutionary. These rumours must be stopped. I have not yet sent my subscription, but now I know what I shall have to do. My admiration for Cagliostro demands that I should set an example." Rising to his feet he added in more gentle tones: "No, no, my dear lady; you are much too clever a woman not to see at once how futile these tales are. Think it all over quietly and come to Saverne in a fortnight's time to help me celebrate my birthday. And I hope you will present me with different views about my friend." He had recovered his old friendly smile by now. "I shall look forward to Saverne."

Utterly dejected and quite beside herself, the baroness flitted out.

That very day, despite the fact that, strictly speaking, it was against the rules of his Church, Rohan contributed a sum of 20,000 francs and a fine piece of land towards the realisation of the plan of a new Lodge, which by his express wish was to be called *Cagliostrostrum*. The little building shot up with magic

speed, and the laying of the foundation stone was carried out with great pomp and ceremony. Thus circumstances conspired to smooth the dark and threatening frowns on the Grand Master's brow, and Strassburg at last breathed more freely. He no longer talked of leaving the town.

At the end of August, Cagliostro, together with his suite, transferred his abode to the magnificent castle of Saverne, whose great chimneys from that day grew blacker and blacker with the smoke from his alchemistic furnaces.

At night the two friends would sit talking on the beautiful terrace of the castle, which faced west, and from which there was a magnificent view of the Vosges. And there they would remain until the early hours of the morning, while above their heads the great white stars shone calm and dispassionate.

But under ground, in the great massive cellars of the castle, they prosecuted their search for alchemistic gold. There they worked, amid crucibles, cylinders and retorts, day and night, over fires that now burned white and anon died down, and like a setter, Benito had to watch so as not to miss a single item in his master's endless list of rules and regulations. But he was quite happy at the work. Once again life had become full of adventure and stir. Who could tell? Perhaps his master was really a maker of gold. It was certainly possible. Aye—down there, in those vaulted depths, mercury was fixed by means of *strattum Saturni*, in order to be made into the Philosopher's Stone, *materia prima*.

Gold? That was a trifling matter! If it had only been a question of making wretched gold! To accomplish this necessitated an operation lasting from seven to ten days, and this operation had already been begun. In a few days they would be able to see the results. *Materia prima*, on the other hand—the production of *materia prima* was the crowning achievement of an exceedingly difficult operation lasting two hundred and seventy days. It was certainly an achievement worthy of much labour and sweat; for *materia prima* meant the mastery of the whole material world. And when in addition to all this, Cag-

liostro added his secret doctrine, the hermetic science of the great Coft—the complete control of the material and spiritual world would be an acknowledged fact. Nevertheless the Master still hesitated to reveal his knowledge of the most secret mysteries of magic.

Lorenza had also come to Saverne, and often used to walk in the beautiful large park. Padrone always accompanied her; for he needed sunlight. He now suffered from heart disease brought on by overmuch travel and change, which his little body could not stand. Lorenza felt that he had at most only a few more years to live, and was all the more anxious to spoil him; and the little dog thanked her for her care with all his faithful friendly and pathetic little being.

Since their first meeting, Lorenza had found no opportunity of speaking to Abbé Georgel; but through her quaint little dog she had begun to cultivate quite a happy and innocent friendship with the Cardinal. One day the little dog went out alone, sniffing every flower on his way and enjoying the warm rays of the August sun on his long silky coat. Suddenly one of the great wolf-hounds, which were kept for the hunt at Saverne, sprang upon him. Padrone defended himself; but the result of the fight could not long remain in doubt, and the great beast had just seized the proud little dog, who did not whine or howl, by the back of the neck, when it was driven off by a smart kick from the Cardinal who had hurried to the spot. Rohan angrily upbraided the servants who had been looking on at the fight and laughing; and then he picked Padrone up. The little creature was bleeding from many wounds, and his heart was thumping wildly; but he licked the Prince's hand gratefully. The spaniel's nobility so delighted the Cardinal that with his own hands he carried him to the doctor, who lived in one of the wings of the castle, and stopped to watch the washing and binding up of the wounds. Tightly held to the Cardinal's side, Padrone quietly allowed all that was neces-

sary to be done, and only moved his tiny little red tongue a little when the doctor hurt him.

Half an hour later, Rohan bore Padrone, all covered with bandages, to Lorenza, who was already somewhat anxious at the disappearance of her pet. This was the beginning of their friendship.

Sometimes Lorenza would go for a ride with the Cardinal, and on these occasions a mounted groom always followed at a respectful distance. The Cardinal found Cagliostro's beautiful fair wife most attractive, but in conversation with her he tactfully refrained from indulging in the compliments which usually rose so easily to his tongue. The two merely joked and discussed the fashions, precious stones, or the beauty of the scenery. Lorenza had no liking for love poems, but took great delight in Gozzi's sentimental plays, which she had seen in Venice. She would describe them with so much animation, sometimes even imitating the actors, that very often the Cardinal could hardly stop laughing. At other times she would sing some of the simple sacred songs so common in Rome, accompanying her sweet low voice on the guitar. When she did so, Padrone and Rohan would sit perfectly still gazing at her; for, in her sweet childish piety she was extraordinarily lovely, a veritable masterpiece of God.

Meanwhile, within the magic circle the crucibles in which the gold was being formed, hummed madly on the furnaces, and at last the day arrived when the success of the first experiment was to demonstrate the possibility of further wonders.

The Cardinal and Cagliostro were alone in the laboratory, just as they had been ten days previously, when Cagliostro had placed the lead in the crucibles, sprinkled his famous red powder over it, and then covered the vessels with fireproof plaster lids, which were sealed again and again with the Cardinal's heavy signet-ring, which he only took off at night.

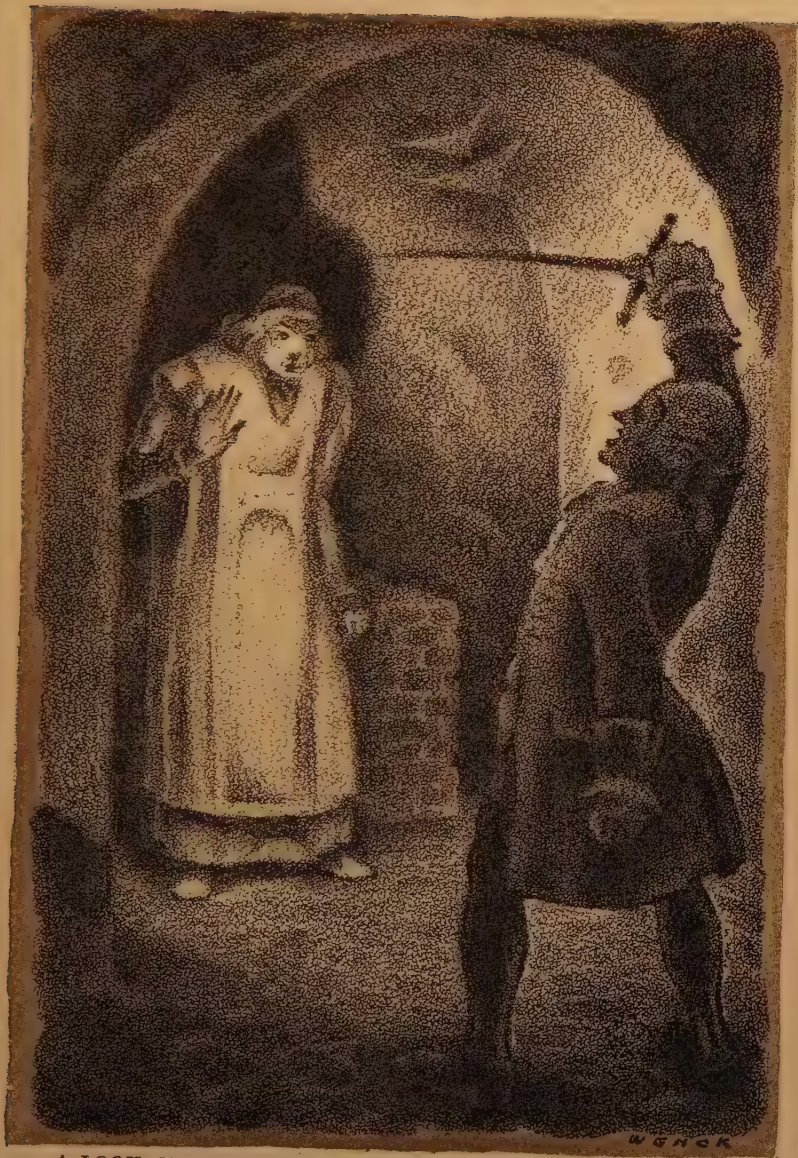
Rohan was excited and restless. He had slept badly the night before, for he had suddenly wakened in the dark with

the feeling that he was not alone in his room. As there was no response when he called and rang his bell he had lighted a candle himself, and as he did so, he thought he heard a door close. Probably the whole thing was only a delusion on the part of his sleepy senses, for nothing had been stolen, and the door leading to Cagliostro's rooms was, as usual, securely bolted. Moreover, the valet who had at last risen from his leaden slumbers and hastened to his master, had proved that since the door of the adjoining room was locked, no one could possibly have entered his room from outside.

After chanting the customary solemn incantations, Cagliostro cautiously lifted the crucible from the fire. They then proceeded to examine the Cardinal's seals on the plaster lid. They were unbroken. Deception was, therefore, out of the question. With the utmost care, Cagliostro removed the plaster coverings with a hammer. Although he had been expecting what he saw, the Cardinal could not suppress a cry. In the crucible was a nugget of gold, pure solid gold, a fact which was immediately and irrefutably demonstrated by testing it with *aqua regia*! The Cardinal embraced his Master. With a compassionate shrug of his shoulders, the latter abandoned himself to his embraces. Whereupon he called for Benito. With a crafty smile on his face, the "golden rascal" solemnly presented them with a refreshing drink, and chuckling to himself, trudged off.

So deeply affected was Rohan by the miracle he had witnessed, that he had become quite pale. So the belief of the ages, which so many had scoffed at—the belief that it was possible to make gold—was true after all! Albertus Magnus, Pietro di Abano, Raymundus Lullus, John Dee, Agrippa of Nettesheim, Nicholas Flamel and Paracelsus, had not lived in vain; they had not been chasing a chimera! It was all true! Before the, alas! all too credulous eyes of the Cardinal, there certainly lay a piece of gold made from lead by means of a magic alchemistic process. The Cardinal gasped for joy.

Cagliostro contemplated him with a dark and disapproving



A LOOK OF GLOOMY FEROCITY CAME INTO HIS DARK AND
DISTORTED FEATURES

scowl, and thrusting his iron chin forward, exclaimed grimly: "The time has come for me to confide my deepest secret to you. I will reveal myself to you as if I stood before the Throne of the Great Architect of the Universe. *Helion, Melion, Tetragrammaton! In herbis, in verbis, et in lapidibus!* Understand, Rohan, who stands before you here!"

Raising himself to his full height, he brandished his sword, and a look of gloomy ferocity came into his dark and distorted features. The candles flickered. Shadows crept out of every corner of the mysterious vaults. Rohan, petrified with fear, sat on a cold smelting stove, careless of the fact that he was soiling his beautiful silk cassock. In the dancing glare of the red flame, his face wore an expression of childish terror. Cagliostro raised an arm.

"The Great Coft himself stands before you!"

The roar of the magician's voice had a ring of exultation: "*In hac lacrimarum valle nec inferiora secutus!*" The words rolled out in impressive cadence. "Jehovah Himself, the stern ruler of the starry heavens, has sent me to you! The pure and holy wisdom which He, the Great Architect, revealed to men, did not, despite its divine clarity and beauty, descend unsullied through the ages of the Patriarchs; Adam, Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob observed it and were obedient to the Word of God. They were the Custodians of the Truth, which is Jehovah's wisdom, afterwards disfigured ever more and more in the mouths of the Prophets and the Fathers of the Church, and at last degraded into all that was bestial in man, more especially by that Usurper, Moses. The place of the miracles was taken by the cumbersome wisdom of the pulpits, and now there is but little of the divine teaching left. To teach this divine doctrine once more, in all its purity, clarity and wisdom, in accordance with the plan Jehovah ordained in the beginning, is the mission which I am sent to fulfil—I, the Great Coft, am that I am, older by many hundred years than the age to which you belong."

He was silent, and reached out for his bumper. Utterly dumfounded, Rohan sat, with his head still sunk on his breast, and his hands resting loosely on the stones of the smelting-oven.

"Now I must unite my Egyptian doctrine, which contains the magic wisdom of the Patriarchs, with the Roman throne, so that the two may again be one—the rule of the Church and the spirit of eternal wisdom. This will be your task, Rohan! I greet you, as he whom alone I have chosen, to help me to lead ignorant man out of the Valley of Tears, up to the blue Dome of the Great Architect. Rise! Thou hast been filled with the breath of Jehovah and the Great Coft hath sanctified thee!"

Rohan swayed as he was lifted high into the air by Cagliostro's powerful arms. The tall candles flickered unsteadily, the fire in the furnace burned fitfully beneath the crucible, in which the red lion was preparing for his mystic nuptials. But above in the deep blue heavens of the night, the great white stars moved serenely on their way, unseen by the two friends. And yet . . . did not a fiery band of meteors shoot through the solemn silence of the sky at that very moment, as it were a burst of mocking laughter? And did not the great loving heart of the Universe stand still for the space of a beat?

No one had seen anything. No one had heard anything. Chronos repaired the broken thread, and Time went gliding on afresh, as if nothing had happened. But was not his wrinkled face perchance the richer by one twinkle of mockery, one glance of scorn? Who could tell?

Lorenza awoke from a deep sleep. Her heart was beating fast, and her poor soul was seized with sudden qualms. She looked up at the star-spangled vault of the summer sky, and her fears were calmed. Drowsily she dropped her head to the pillow again.

But in the infinite depths of ether, Uranus, unseen by mortal eye, hurtled along on his terrible course, and passed out of the constellation of Gemini into that of Cancer.

"Truth to tell, Monseigneur, I have news for you." And Baroness Oberkirch wagged her head from side to side, and gave the Cardinal an arch glance. They were sitting under a canopy on the terrace, facing the fairest stretch of green lawn in the park, with its background of beautiful beech woods. The baroness brandished a letter in her hand. But Rohan stared sleepily and dreamily into the blue distance.

"You seem to have learnt the laws of suspense from one of the ancient rhetoricians, dear lady," he replied with a weary smile. "Nevertheless, I am glad that you have at last deigned to visit us. Well, and what is your piece of news?"

"The Marquise de Boulainvilliers wishes me to ask your Eminence whether you would allow her to pay you a visit. She hopes to be here about the 20th of September."

The handsome replate rubbed his hands with joy. "The dear Marquise! My oldest friend! It fits in excellently. My birthday is on the 25th, and according to certain hints Planta has let drop, things will be pretty lively here on that day. I believe he is arranging a surprise for me in the shape of a popular festival," he added, with a touch of good-natured irony. "Dear Marie Madeleine, what ages it seems since I saw her! She must now be approaching the fifties, isn't she? My God, how old we are all getting! I do hope she is coming without her husband."

With a faint smile, the Baroness confirmed this hope. She knew that the Prince had but little liking for the Marquis, who was a grandson of Samuel Bernard, the famous financier, and that he had taken the *mésalliance* made by the Marquise very much to heart. A hectic flush spread over the Baroness's wrinkled cheeks. "Are you still as strict as ever in these matters, your Eminence? Has not your friendship with the foreigner modified your views a little?"

Much amused, Rohan held out his left hand to her; on the little finger he wore a large signet ring with the Rohan arms engraved upon it. "How do you like that?"

"A beautiful ring, Monseigneur. I have been admiring it."

Rohan gave her a significant glance. "Cagliostro's handiwork! He made it—do you understand? If you ask me out of what, I tell you—out of nothing. I saw it all with my own eyes. I was present at the time. Now then, Baroness, what have you to say? The jeweller and engraver valued the stone at 25,000 francs. Admit that it is a valuable present."

The good lady was beside herself with astonishment, and her jaw dropped.

Rohan noticed it and smiled. "But that is not all. In the cellars of my palace, and in my presence, he produced about 6,000 francs worth of gold out of ordinary common lead. Yes, dear lady. These are no wild illusions, Baroness, for the proofs are there. I tell you, he is a holy man."

Rohan had worked himself up to fever heat. But the baroness seemed to be all angles—her eyes, her ears and her face. Then suddenly she leant forward and whispered: "People are telling all sorts of tales about his love intrigues in St. Petersburg and Mitau."

The Cardinal shrugged his shoulders. "St. Petersburg! What can you expect of an Empress who corresponded with Monsieur de Voltaire, with that criminal and knave who cheated his benefactor, the King of Prussia, for the sake of a little money, with that agitator who wrote books against religion, morality and the established order, and was too cowardly to acknowledge that he was the author of them? Cagliostro is a very different person!"

The baroness wagged her head at an alarming speed. "There are also queer stories about his wife and a Russian prince."

Rohan smiled ironically. "Pooh! She is a delightful woman, and is entitled to do as she pleases. Such things have been ever since the beginning of the world, and neither you nor I, dear lady, will ever alter them. Besides," and he smiled cryptically, "you know what the world is. Ever since Cagliostro came to Saverne, I am sure people have been accusing me of having an intrigue with the beautiful wife behind her husband's back. Am I not right?"

The baroness uttered a shrill cry of indignation. "Oh, but, Monseigneur! No, no, nobody would ever dream of such a thing! But as for Madame Cagliostro . . . it is said that in St. Petersburg it was owing to financial considerations."

Indignantly the Cardinal expostulated with her. "I do not wish to hear any more about it, madam! A man who can turn lead into gold. . . . Ridiculous! One word from him, and Boehmer would fly to Saverne with a million of money. But what am I talking about—a million! Why he would gladly hang his unsaleable necklace round the Countess's neck if only Cagliostro could be induced to reveal his alchemistic secrets to him. Nonsense Baroness! I implore you to contradict all such rumours most emphatically."

Somewhat alarmed, the baroness sank back into her chair, and at the same moment a flunkey threw open the double doors, leading to the Prince's private apartments, and announced, "His Excellency, Count Cagliostro!" Plump and massive, the little man waddled in, and made straight for Rohan, without noticing that the baroness had risen in confusion to her feet. He roared into the Cardinal's ear: "I have cast your horoscope, Rohan. But I cannot understand why the shadow of a crown falls over your Seventh House."

The Prince's cheeks flushed a stinging red, and he laid a finger to his lips by way of warning.

It was growing dark. The world seemed to be lulled to sleep by the sweet scent of roses. Lorenza was sitting on the semi-circular marble seat in front of the round flower-bed. Padrone, breathing heavily, was asleep on her lap. The evening star could already be seen shedding its silver radiance behind the jagged outline of the distant Vosges.

The young woman's mind was full of bitter thoughts. It was dreadful to be forced to live with Giuseppe. Nothing was sacred in his eyes. Now that he had become the friend of such an exalted Prince of the Church, had the time not come to turn over a new leaf? She shuddered. No, Giuseppe would

never turn over a new leaf. A relentless curse hung over his head driving him ever forward on to the point of a sword.

A shadow was coming towards her along the path. She looked up. It was the Abbé Georgel in his black cassock. His monotonous voice was as cool as the evening air. "Are you reading the stars, Countess?" She nodded. "I must have a word with your reverence." He smiled. "Is it to be a confession?" She returned his smile. "Not quite." He sat down at a short distance from her. Both were silent for a while.

And then Lorenza asked the eternal question about fate, which men have put ever since the world was made: "Is it God's will that mankind should suffer?"

Although the Jesuit could not see her face in the darkness, he could guess how profound was the young woman's misery. "It is suffering," he replied, "which brings us to God." There was a suggestion of sharpness in her retort: "Then it would have been better if He had never created us!" In an instant the Abbé rejoined: "In His infinite wisdom he recognised our frailty, and saw that we could only become purer, better and more perfect by undergoing the discipline of suffering."

Lorenza's voice had grown hard: "Then, in His infinite wisdom He ought not to have created mankind so frail. Does one really become purer and more perfect through suffering? Alas, your Reverence, these are mere words. Men only become better through goodness, they only become purer through love, and they only grow more perfect through insight. I don't wish to hear anything more about your God, who has made the world a vale of tears! According to the will of Gentle Jesus, every man ought to be happy, because every man has an equal right to happiness."

Calmly the Jesuit replied, "Not on earth, Countess. You start out with false premises and so cannot help ending in false conclusions. Before you can proclaim every man's equal right to happiness, you should try to perceive the vast differences there are between men in their conception of what constitutes happiness."

Lorenza's reply was uttered slowly but with extraordinary self-possession. "In its mother's womb every child is still blind and innocent, a creature of God, and not yet of this earth. But as soon as it is born its soul is endowed with the capacity for good and evil. Is it not unjust of God to convert a pure and innocent soul into the sport of good and evil passions? Without raising a finger, God allows souls to fall into corruption, because they are too blind to see, and too innocent to recognise it as such. Is this not unmerciful? The stars are not like that. They are good friends and advisers. They show us our weakness and teach us how we can be different, and keep out of the way of evil. Christ was certainly a great reader of the stars, for only one who is kind of heart and has grasped the wisdom of the stars can speak so simply about happiness and purity. Why do not the priests of the Church teach the same doctrine as the Saviour?"

The Abbé shook his head. "You defend the stars because you imagine you have seen their work, Countess. And you arraign the Almighty without having made any pious attempt to fathom his wise intentions. But before one passes sentence one should listen to what the accused has to say, shouldn't one?"

"The accused remains silent," Lorenza replied quickly. "He allowed Sin to enter the world as a temptation, and still looks passively on while men steal because they are wretched, and commit murder because they have gone astray. Is all this His Fatherly Omnipotence? I am a human being and need help and comfort. Now the stars give me both. They do not give me much, it is true; but they give me some."

With a faint note of reproach in his voice, the Jesuit replied: "Did He not send the Saviour?"

An expression of childlike simplicity entered Lorenza's face as she looked up at the silver stars in the black canopy of heaven: "Oh, sweet Lord Jesus, if truly Thou art there beyond the stars, then have pity on my poor strayed soul and take it to Thyself!"

"Amen!" And the Abbé made the sign of the cross over her.

Cagliostro lay in his large four-poster bed and was bored. He had drawn the curtains aside so that the friendly September sun could shine freely on his lair. Rohan had just left him to attend Vespers; besides which an old lady friend of the handsome prelate had just arrived—a certain Marquise de Boulainvilliers—and he had made this a further excuse for leaving Cagliostro, as he was obliged to attend to her.

The fat little man was ill and yet not ill. A low but quite pleasant fever had laid hold of him. A few days previously, when, after standing over the furnaces for a long time, he had gone out into the moist night air with the Prince and drunk iced Moselle, he must have caught a chill. And now he had to stay in bed, and was always peevish if Rohan, Benito, or whoever it might be, did not keep him company.

"*Joli Seigneur! Vive le roi!* In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost!" croaked a harsh metallic voice. In one of the great bow windows there was a huge cage in which was perched a magnificent red and grey cockatoo, who was looking out on to the sunny day with an expression of angry boredom. Then hopping along his perch and putting his head first on one side and then on the other, he screeched his meaningless words.

The little man, who looked like a fat boy in bed, contemplated the bird. Am I not another bird of the same species, he thought to himself, kept by my benefactors in a cage from which I cannot escape because my plumage is too bright? A hundred eyes would spy out my retreat. And owing to good living, my wings have grown shorter. I wonder, my friend Giuseppe, whether you could eat dry bread and salt again, as you did at the Benfratelli's, and wash it down with water? And do you think you could sleep on the hard floor? He shuddered.

Giuseppe, you are a cockatoo, angry and magnificent in your narrow golden cage! That's what you are, my good, fat fellow!

You shriek and allow yourself to be fed in return. You know no more than that bird does. But you can squall and chatter, and people take your noises for wisdom and music. Oh, thou foolish century of so-called enlightenment! How richly dost thou deserve to be fleeced by so excellent a fellow as Giuseppe!

Thoughtfully he followed the bird with his eyes, as it hopped from one end of its perch to the other. Would you like to get out, dear bird? I would too, and have a really fine experience, like that goose Lorenza with the swell prince in St. Petersburg. Oh, *santo porco!* But I have grown too fond of ease, although at times I long with all my heart for a foolhardy adventure in the world. I should admire you, Giuseppe, if you did such a thing. But it would be better if you did not do it; an inner voice seems to tell me that it might cost you your head and your neck. Be on your guard! Do not forget the conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter and Mars in the Twelfth House. That signifies dying in prison.

Feeling alarmed, he sat up, and looked at the bird, until it puffed out its feathers, raised its crest, and gave vent to wild and raucous curses, of which it had already learnt a few from the present occupier of the room. "*Corpo di bacco! Mort de ma vie!*"

The invalid laughed gruffly and lay comfortably back on his pillows. So far you have done very well, my son; now don't go and do anything stupid. Let the women go to the deuce, and remain the Great Coft. *In hoc signo vinces!*

"*Vive le roi!*" croaked the cockatoo harshly. But Giuseppe was no longer listening. His feverish blood coursed pleasantly through his veins, and he closed his eyes. When Rohan entered the room he was already fast asleep and snoring loudly. The Cardinal quietly placed a vase of beautiful bright asters close to the head of the bed, cast a fond glance at the sleeper and crept noiselessly from the room.

It was most awkward that the Marquise de Boulainvilliers should have gone to Strassburg, as the servants declared she had done; and^e the Marquis also was not at home; he was staying

in Paris. To whom had the Marquise gone? To Strassburg, to Cardinal Rohan. "Oh, that's the handsome prelate!" whispered Jeanne to her husband. "If only I could meet him!"

Nicholas de la Motte, an ugly but exceptionally well-built officer of His Majesty's Gendarmes, bowed his long pale face thoughtfully, frowned darkly with his black eyebrows, swayed irresolutely from side to side and stroked his scarlet silver-embroidered uniform with his huge hands. The journey to Passy from Luneville where he was in garrison, in order to see the confounded Marquise had, in any case, cost more money than he cared to spend. And now he found that his wife was determined to set out immediately for Strassburg. It was not the journey he dreaded, but it was extremely doubtful whether the wealthy lady would allow herself to be propitiated.

Jeanne turned her back sharply upon him, and with one of her unaccountable impulses, dashed down the steps. "To Strassburg, coachman!" The coachman grunted something about the number of days he had been on the road, and about not being prepared for it; but one eloquent look from her expressive eyes, and the carriage moved forward again.

Jeanne de la Motte, *née* Baroness de St. Rémy de Luz de Valois, was, unfortunately for herself, of royal descent. By the charming Nicole dé Savigny, Henry II had had a natural child, whom he had recognised and called Henry de St. Remy, and this offspring of a monarch's passing whim had, according to the custom of the time, been legitimised. It was thus that the St. Rémys de Luz de Valois had come by their coat of arms—argent on a bend azure three lillies or. It had been Jeanne's fate to be the last of this illustrious line. Her father, the dissolute Baron Jacques, had been obliged to turn his back on the last remnants of his family's once vast estates of Fontette, and go out into the world a beggar, subsisting on the immoral earnings of Marie Jossel, his former buxom servant girl, whom he had taken to wife.

Accompanied by their child, they had wandered on foot from Bar sur Aube, through Paris and beyond to the suburb of

Boulogne, where they knew the local *curé*. The open highway had therefore been quite familiar to Jeanne as a child of eight. She had often driven the village cattle out to pasture, and been obliged to stand barefoot in the wind and rain in the fields, clad only in a little frock that had been mended and patched again and again. Soon afterwards Marie Jossel had thrown her husband out of doors for love of a giant guardsman, and Baron Jacques took refuge in the Hôtel Dieu where he died, because there was nothing else for him to do. It was now that the little Jeanne knew what it was to be severely beaten if she did not bring back enough money from her begging.

"Have pity on a poor orphan of the blood of the Valois!" Who would have dreamt of believing the filthy bedraggled little brat of eight, as she stood shivering with hunger and cold in the high road? Was anyone sufficiently moved to put a copper in her little hand? There was not much pity left in the world for the blood of the Valois, and few believed her tale. And thus very soon a hard and piercing glint entered the child's blue eyes as she looked at the hundreds of luxurious carriages that plied between Paris and Versailles with their distinguished and gorgeously dressed occupants. Oh to be able to drive about like that! This had been her dearest wish—to drive in a fine carriage in gorgeous clothes, smiling, haughty and honoured. Often she had clenched her frozen little fists, had little Jeanne of the extinct line of the Valois, her spirit crushed but defiant still.

One day, however, attracted by the cries of the child, the Marquise de Boulainvilliers had stopped her carriage and the great and portly lady had leant out and examined the little girl with some curiosity. The Marquise and her fat husband, the Chief Justice of Paris, were on their way to their estates at Passy. In spite of her husband's scowls the Marquise invited Jeanne to get into the carriage, and when she had tested the truth of the child's story, she took her home and placed her in the girl's school at Passy. At the age of fourteen she was

handed over to a dressmaker in Paris, and was employed by her as a laundress, a messenger for delivering and fetching washing, a cook, ironer, and seamstress—in fact as a maid of all work. From time to time she was allowed to spend a few weeks at Passy, as chambermaid to the Marquise, and during these visits the fat old Marquis was constantly at her heels. When she reached the age of twenty, at the instigation of the Marquise, Jeanne's pedigree was officially established by the famous d'Hozier. As her pedigree proved her to be of royal descent, an appeal was made to Versailles for her support, which was so far successful that she was granted a pension of 800 francs from the King's Privy Purse. Soon afterwards she was taken by the Marquise and placed in the Abbey of Longchamps, which opened its doors only to the daughters of the nobility.

And so this lively and fascinating young woman of one and twenty—Jeanne of the blood of the Valois—was to be a little nun, a little black and grey nun. Nobody was ever again to see the golden glints in her silky auburn hair, nobody was ever again to look into her expressive blue eyes, beneath their dark and finely arched brows, nobody was ever again to behold her little gleaming white teeth and her bewitching smile, which made her somewhat large mouth seem so beautiful. Her little breasts, her dazzling white skin, her light and springy walk—no man was ever to be allowed to admire any of these beauties!

Oh wild and vicious blood of the Valois! Convents and cloisters were not for thee! Thou didst lift the girl Jeanne, what time she was three and twenty, over the lofty walls of the Convent of Longchamps, thou didst place her in a coach, and bring her with her little bundle under her arm, back to Bar sur Aube, which she had not seen for many a long year, and where the destiny of the last scion of the Saint Rémys de Luz de Valois was to be fulfilled!

The following day, Madame de Surmont, the good-natured wife of His Honour, the President of the Salt-Makers of Bar sur Aube, heard that a princess had put up at *La Tête Rouge*,

the lowest tavern in the town. Perhaps she was a fugitive, or actually a victim of persecution. The motherly feelings of Madame de Surmont's maternal breast imperatively demanded that she should fetch the poor blue-blooded child away from *La Tête Rouge*, and offer her shelter for the night in the de Surmont mansion. This one night grew to be a whole year.

During this year the restless and brilliant Jeanne de Valois ruled the house of the Salt President, his purse and his heart, to the bitter chagrin of his legitimate spouse. The Bar sur Aube fate of the St. Rémys at this juncture wore red breeches with silver braid and was an officer in His Majesty's Gendarmerie, attached to the Bourguignon company of that corps in Luneville; his name was Marc Antoine Nicolas de la Motte, and he was a nephew of the de Surmonts. They met at some amateur theatricals, in which they both took part. Nicolas taught Jeanne elocution, and taught her so well, that they were compelled to marry in haste. Jeanne, who at twenty-four had become Madame de la Motte, presented her husband very shortly afterwards with two little de la Mottes. But the twins, to be sure, would not settle down, and a few days later very rightly decided to retire from the world altogether.

Nicolas belonged to the *petite noblesse*, but on the strength of her almighty power as a bastard of the Valois, Jeanne created him a Count in his own right. A Valois, could not, of course, marry anyone lower than a count! But in spite of Presidential protests, Madame de Surmont turned both the young people out of the house.

This was by no means a good beginning, more especially as even the Marquise had maintained an angry silence ever since Jeanne's leap over the convent walls had deposited her in the wide wide world. Nicolas' debts were more numerous than the hairs of his head, and in spite of the most painstaking and conscientious pumping, the King's Privy Purse refused to yield more than 800 francs a year. It was a dog's life! The creditors pressed for payment. Nicolas was of a jealous disposition, and Luneville was a dull provincial town!

Having learnt elocution, Jeanne wanted to practise it. Thus she eloquently poured out her passionate desires into the ears of her jealous husband. At first he turned a deaf ear, and it took her some time to convince him; but at last he declared himself ready to ask for a transfer. But to obtain this a certificate of service was required, and it was one of the rules of his crack regiment that no such certificate could be given until a man had paid all his debts. The refusal to grant him a certificate of service meant that he would never win either promotion or honours. The only solution of the difficulty was to appeal to the Marquise de Boulainvilliers—perhaps she might loosen her purse-strings. Jeanne had made up her mind to fling herself at the feet of the Marquise, and it was with this end in view that she now found herself on the road to Strassburg with Nicolas.

But the Marquise was not to be found in Strassburg, and there was no alternative but to push on to Saverne. Nevertheless Jeanne did not lose heart and tried to cheer her grumbling husband. Always keenly interested in Court scandals, she proceeded to tell him the history of Rohan's fall from grace.

At the time when it had occurred, Rohan was Ambassador in Vienna, under the ægis of old Marie Thérèse, who hated him; for she declared that with his Paris manners he was corrupting the whole of her Austrian aristocracy. She detested him; but this did not mend matters. For Vienna was delighted with him, and even her son, the Crown Prince, was charmed with the handsome and highborn dignitary of the Church. One day, however, Rohan, in a confidential report to the Foreign Minister, Aiguillon, had written the following amusing lines, which were to seal his fate:—

“I have seen Marie Thérèse weeping over the sufferings of the oppressed Poles, but it seems to me that the Empress can produce tears at pleasure, for while with one hand she holds a little lace handkerchief to dry her streaming eyes, with the other she reaches out for the sword with which to partition Poland.”

The indiscreet Aiguillon showed the letter to the Du Barry, and the Du Barry read it aloud at one of her private suppers. Everybody applauded, but there was a certain person in the company who repeated the words to Marie Antoinette, who was still Dauphiness at the time, and she could think of nothing better to do than to despatch a report of the incident at once to Vienna. Thus the stone was set rolling, and from that moment the Prince was hated, not only by Marie Thérèse, but also by Marie Antoinette for having held up the honour and virtue of her mother to the mockery of the abandoned mistress of her royal father-in-law.

Such was the tale, embellished by many piquant details, which the charming wasp droned into the ears of her disgruntled elocution master. She concluded with a giggle: "The little Prince was recalled and fell into disgrace. Marie Antoinette no longer sees him and refuses to vouchsafe him a word. But what do you think? The donkey thereupon promptly fell in love with her and for seven years has been making sheep's eyes at her in vain. Do not forget that he is twenty years older than the Queen. He has led a dissolute life and knows that as far as he is concerned, the end is near. He is now trying by every means in his power to get into touch with the Austrian woman again, but so far has not succeeded. But just you wait, my handsome Cardinal!" she exclaimed shaking her fist at the castle of Saverne which loomed before them. "Just you wait a bit! You want to get to Versailles to see the Queen? That will be mere child's play if Jeanne puts her finger in the pie!"

Nicolas looked at his wife in astonishment, as with flashing eyes she sprang to her feet in the carriage. When she was hatching her great schemes, as was undoubtedly the case at the moment, she looked bewitching.

At a short distance from the castle they met a company of horsemen in hunting costume riding at a slow trot along a shady grass belt on the edge of the wood. Grooms blowing

merry blasts on their hunting horns pranced in the van and a leash of howling sheep dogs closed the procession. A tall man of military bearing with a bushy moustache separated himself from the company and rode towards the carriage saluting: "May I ask, Madam, whether you wish to see His Eminence?"

Her eyes sparkling with excitement, Jeanne replied in clear tones: "No no, sir, I have only come to pay a visit to my friend and foster-mother, the Marquise de Boulainvilliers." The rider bowed courteously. "Madame la Marquise will be delighted. Pierre!" he called to a mounted groom, "conduct these ladies to the Marquise and see to it that they are well looked after. At your service, Madam!" He saluted and rode off to rejoin the others.

The groom came up to the carriage and asked what name he should give.

Jeanne looked proudly at him and her vibrating voice rang as she pronounced for the first time the name of which history has so carefully preserved the memory: "The Comtesse de la Motte Valois."

Heavily powdered and rouged, fat and fifty, the Marquise waddled indignantly into the dainty little drawing-room. She was seething with indignation and had prepared to pour the vials of her wrath upon the heads of the uninvited guests. But hardly had she crossed the threshold of the room than a vision of delight fluttered towards her like a dragon-fly and dropped at her feet on the floor. Slender arms embraced her knees and a sweet coaxing voice exclaimed, "Do not send us away! Not a moment's happiness have we had because our union was consummated without your blessing."

Jeanne's sobs were enough to melt a heart of stone. In the shadowy depths of the room a pale young officer of His Majesty's Gendarmerie was also kneeling and sobbing. The Marquise was quite bewildered. She had not expected this! But the sweet tearful voice continued eloquently: "Give us your blessing! Forgive the sorrow I have caused your kind heart.

I know I have been ungrateful; but love conquered my thoughtless heart!"

Deeply moved, the Marquise looked at her and then turned her eyes to Nicolas. "So it was for his sake that you ran away from the convent?"

Jeanne saw that the Marquise suspected nothing. So she proceeded to tell her story, and Nicolas could hardly believe his ears, so simple and moving was the fairy-tale that fell falteringly from Jeanne's childish red lips. What a splendid proud fellow he was and what a brave child was Jeanne to be able to forget herself so utterly in her love! The Marquise wept. They all three wept. "My children!" she sobbed, and completely conquered and overcome she embraced them both.

Very soon after this touching scene the two ladies withdrew. Powder and paint had to be renewed, and Jeanne performed the duties of maid as she had done in the past and took the opportunity to continue her spell-binding narrative. The Marquise believed every word, and, moreover, was extremely amused by the entertaining little anecdotes about the President of the Salt Makers of Bar sur Aube. How grotesque and ridiculous were these bourgeois upstarts! The Marquise purred with delight, like an old cat, and Jeanne went prattling on. "How painfully conscious I was of the abyss which separated you, dear Marquise, from this commercial rabble!" But what was she to do? Her noble husband was under an obligation to these distant but wealthy relatives who had adopted him as a child. But she, who had been used to better things, had never been able to overcome her feeling of isolation. And then with a tender look, full of the milk of human kindness, she added, as she removed the peignoir from the shoulders of the Marquise. "I took the first opportunity of leaving that house, and preferred the most abject poverty in Luneville to all the wealth of those bourgeois."

Now this showed a truly aristocratic feeling, and was deserving of reward. The Marquise promised to help her. She would make herself responsible for all the debts in Luneville, and

might perhaps do even more—introduce Jeanne to the Cardinal, for instance. Here the Marquise, who like all elderly women, loved intrigues, observed slyly, “Be careful, Jeanne, the prince is still a very handsome man, and they tell me,” and here a little sigh escaped her, “likes the ladies. His heart beats as fast now as it did in his youth, whenever he sees a beautiful woman—and you, my child, are perfectly delightful. By the bye, is Nicolas a jealous husband?”

Jeanne made a grimace. “Very! But, of course in a case like this, one must be accommodating, and I think he will understand.” Her eyes flashed resolutely and sought those of the Marquise.

“Oh, and there is another point that is worth considering,” the elder woman murmured affectionately; “should the Cardinal. . . . We have many fine visitors here, and he is sometimes very much engaged. . . . But there is always Count Cagliostro, his friend, and what he wants the Cardinal does at once. He is a foreign scholar, uncommonly ugly and with most peculiar manners. But. . . . I hope he will like Nicolas.”

She pursed her lips and smiled to herself. The two women understood each other. The Marquise rang a bell and ordered her carriage, for she wanted to take Jeanne for a short drive. Nicolas, to whom his wasp had quickly whispered the result of the interview, was quite pleased to remain behind with a goodly bottle of old Tokay.

For many a long day had the broad highway been the destiny of the Saint Rémys de Luz de Valois. It had been on the public highway that King Henry II had first espied the charming Nicole de Savigny. It was on the public highway that the Marquise had met the little beggar girl, and it was to be on the highway in Alsace that Jeanne was to have her first encounter with the handsome Cardinal.

He was riding a white English mare and bore no resemblance to a pillar of the Church, for he was in hunting costume—a green doublet with gold lace and a tuft of falcon’s feathers in his hat. His gun was slung on his back, and a short hunting

knife completed the picture of the enthusiastic hunter. Rohan rode gallantly up to the carriage of the Marquise and saluted her. On horseback in his hunting costume he was an imposing figure.

"Allow me, Monseigneur, to introduce you to a Valois, who has every right to that illustrious name."

Rohan listened without any sign of interest, for what were the many bastards of the many Kings of France compared with a Prince Rohan Guéménée? But when he saw Jeanne his gaze became more intent. "I hope Mademoiselle will stay the night?" The graceful wasp blushed and cast down her eyes.

The Marquise graciously interposed. "And now let me beg an audience for this dear child for to-morrow afternoon. She is in need of the help of a powerful prince of the Church." Rohan's pale blue eyes pierced Jeanne's deep and eloquent orbs with an expression which was almost a question. "If it lies within my modest powers, Mademoiselle. . . ."

The Marquise beaming with joy pressed Jeanne's hand. "Now all is well, my child. Did you hear? By the bye, not Mademoiselle, your Eminence, but Madame."

"So much the better! *Au revoir*, ladies!" And he sprang away. Jeanne looked after him. "What a magnificent man, Marquise!" The latter took Jeanne's two small hands affectionately in hers. "You heard what his Eminence said—so much the better?"

It was the eve of the handsome prelate's birthday and so it was no great wonder that everybody of rank and fashion in Alsace had gathered together in the castle of Saverne. The Rohan Princes were there, the Counts Truchsess and the Counts Salm-Manderscheid, the Salm-Salm Princes, the Hohenlohe Princes and the Counts Königseck—in short a most illustrious company. In the pleasant fashion introduced by Rohan when he was ambassador in Vienna, dinner was served at small tables, to add to the merriment and good cheer of the festivities. Rohan's companion at table was the Marquise with whom he gravely chatted about happy memories. At the table to their

right sat Baroness Oberkirch, and Princess Rohan, the Cardinal's cousin in the company of the martial Baron de Planta and the Abbé Georgel, who, as usual was smiling tactfully. This arrangement had been the result of a little piece of spite on Rohan's part, for the Baroness could not abide his dear and indispensable Abbé. On Rohan's left, however, there sat round one table the greatest European actors of the day—Count Cagliostro, the Countess de la Motte Valois, and the latter's husband. Owing to a slight indisposition, Lorenza, to the great regret of the company, was unable to be present.

That evening Cagliostro wore a steel-grey coat embroidered with gold, a scarlet waistcoat, trimmed with Spanish lace, red breeches of the finest satin and heavy silk stockings with rich gold clocks. Lace cuffs, precious rings and old-fashioned shoe buckles lent further distinction to his attire. Jeanne was a light and airy vision, half decorous and half naked. The evening was to prove one fraught with destiny for her. She felt this in the eyes of the Cardinal, though it is true they were more often turned towards her neighbour, the Italian Count, than towards herself.

Jeanne knew that she looked enchanting, and she drank in the daring glances of the men about her like champagne. Nicolas, however, was looking extremely cross. He felt that he was a fifth wheel in the coach, and shrank back into his seat whenever his neighbour, who was eating greedily, and seemed to stand out conspicuously from the rest of the company, uttered his guttural laugh in the intervals between a flow of nonsensical chatter, huge mouthfuls of food and enormous gulps of wine. Suddenly there was a clink of glasses, the flowers swayed in their vases, and half the company stopped talking and looked spellbound in the direction of the little table.

Cagliostro swallowing down an enormous mouthful of food, threw his massive head back haughtily, and with an expression that was half truculent, half ecstatic, raised his loud trumpet voice like an elephant saying its prayers. "I am delighted, dear Countess, to see you again," he snorted, gazing insolently into

her eyes, which met his in evident perplexity. "The last time we met was in pagan Rome. In those days you had locks as black as night, your name was Lucretia, and you were of the blood royal. You don't seem to remember anything about it; but it doesn't matter! I recognised you at once. You were beautiful and virtuous, and I was overcome with grief when you stabbed yourself with that dagger, simply because, in the absence of your husband, young Tarquinius made such a violent attempt to subject you to his lust. I was deeply grieved."

"Really?" lisped Jeanne, blushing sweetly. "I too had a sort of feeling that we had known each other for a long time."

The fat Count roared with laughter. "Known each other a long time! What a splendid retort! I certainly knew you, but you did not know me; for at that time I was invisible, as my magic calculations of mundane astrological phenomena would not allow of any desecration by human eyes. Yes, you were Lucretia, and you stabbed yourself because a young dandy came into your room at night. The poets made good capital out of the incident; but nowadays, of course, we think rather differently about such things, don't we, dear Countess?"

Jeanne seemed to be enjoying the entertainment immensely. The less she understood, the more full of cryptic comprehension was her smile. Gracefully her delicate, energetic little hand bore her glass of wine like a flower to lips that were far too red and seemed to vibrate and allow a faint buzzing sound to escape them. Then she gave a sidelong glance and a slight shrug of her naked shoulders, and once more a wild gleam entered the oily eyes of her neighbour. A glance also reached her from the next table.

Nicolas, who seemed to be condemned to silence, felt his head swimming. That strange and incomprehensible Jeanne of his was behaving as if she were quite at home. No one dreamed that her mother had been a dissolute maidservant; no one suspected that she had made the seductive dress she wore with her own hands, or that she had no idea of how she was going

to defray the expenses of her journey back to Luneville. She seemed to have been born for this kind of life.

Giuseppe felt that between him and this charming little female there was an extraordinary amount in common. Never before had any woman appealed to him so much! *Santo porco!* What a wonderful bedroom cat she would make! He leant forward to examine her more closely, and Jeanne, pretending not to have noticed anything, thrust her firm little breasts innocently forward. He stopped laughing, and a dark gleam entered his eyes, which suddenly began to squint.

She could sting, could this sweet wasp of the blood royal, thought the Cardinal with a smile; and courteously asking the Marquise to excuse him, he rose and going over to Cagliostro, laid his plump well-kept hand on the latter's arm. "I am delighted, Master, to see you enjoying yourself so much!" And he looked affectionately at him.

The Sicilian gurgled. "I never knew that the wild woods of Germany concealed such enchanting gazelles! Everybody must want to go hunting there!"

Jeanne was all eyes and ears. *Nom d'un chien*, how firmly Cagliostro must be seated in the saddle! Whereupon she suddenly raised her radiant childish face to the Cardinal, and said, "I am so grateful to you, Monseigneur; so grateful for everything, and by no means least for the charming companion you have given me at table. I am enjoying the evening immensely!"

A soft little foot was gently laid on Cagliostro's shoe, her childish gaze met his with a faint suggestion of viciousness, and the moist gleam of the innocent eyes seemed to beg for mercy. She drew back her foot and stammered in confusion, "I beg your pardon!" The clerk of Fortune looked on and made a note. *Porco! Porco!* She was a nice little parcel of good, there was no mistake about that! Good luck to her! Sicily brightened up. And at the same moment Palermo laid down a heavy trump. "Oh, she is a white and innocent dove, my dear Rohan."

Rohan smiled good-naturedly. He saw that Cagliostro did not believe a word of what he was saying, but it pleased him notwithstanding. Why should he not do him a kindness? The woman was charming—very well, he should have her!

But Jeanne became thoughtful. Cagliostro had merely said “Rohan”, not “Monseigneur” or “your Eminence”, or “prince”, but simply “Rohan”! Who could he really be? The Marquise had given her a very inadequate account. Rohan’s friend? . . . How did this friendship begin? A prince of the Church and a wonder-worker. Had there not been Court astrologers in all ages? Rohan . . . he was weaving ambitious schemes . . . Marie Antoinette. . . . Aha! Now she knew! So that was it, my lord prince! You are cautious and use your mysterious bosom friend to prepare the way! Never mind! And she became once more a bewildering dream of eyes, lips and shoulders.

It was very late when at last the lights in the castle were extinguished. The curtsey Jeanne made to the Baroness Oberkirch was exorbitantly low. That lady’s head had been wagging more than ever that day, as if it were loosely attached to her thin neck. But Jeanne glided laughing into the room next door, which had been prepared for her, and banged the door loudly. The worthy Baroness remained standing in the corridor and stared disapprovingly after her. Fancy such a wicked little child being of the blood of the Valois, and in such a holy and exalted household too! With a deep sigh she entered her own room, and was so much upset that she forgot to bolt her door as usual.

Half an hour later all the sleepers in the castle sat up in their beds in terror. Had they not heard a shrill woman’s voice crying for help? Astonished and inquisitive heads peered out of doorways. Servants hurried hither and thither with lighted candles. Baroness Oberkirch swore that some one had broken in upon her virgin slumbers. Was that all? And everybody went back to bed.

Once more the lights went out. Silvery Venus had long ago sunk behind the horizon, and yellow Saturn guided the dark

wings of the sombre night. Dreams both momentous and insignificant visited the castle of Saverne.

The clear mellow gold of a September morning merged into a diaphanous blue mist about the distant Vosges, and the red and gold of the woods were an enchantment to the eye. Delicate gleaming spiders' webs swung in the clear air, which seemed filled with a shimmer of pearl and opal.

The castle was roused by the cheerful notes of a brass band. The peasants had come to serenade their lord on his birthday. Sleepy eyes, with flattened curls nodding above them peered from every window. One was a halo of auburn with golden glints; another was blue-black above features hewn out of granite, yet another was grey with pale blue eyes beneath, and yonder it was a deep gold like the rich ripe fruits of summer. A little dog barked in a friendly bass. Padrone wanted to see what was happening.

Cagliostro never spent much time over his morning toilet. His ablutions consisted chiefly of a chat with Benito, while the boy was shaving him. When the Sicilian was ready he enquired with a growl, "Is she up yet?" Benito chuckled with feigned sympathy. "Owing to the disturbance in the night Madonna Lorenza says she slept badly, and ordered her chocolate quite early."

"Tell her I am coming!"

With an expression of mingled impudence and embarrassment, Cagliostro entered Lorenza's room. She was sitting at her dressing-table alone. Silently he took a seat on a stool behind her. She could see his face in the mirror; his eyes were gazing unheeding out of the window, his expression was defiant and somewhat discontented. She knew what it meant. He had something on his conscience.

Gently she enquired, "What was that cry we heard in the night? Babette tells me that somebody broke into the room of one of the ladies."

He was still looking out of the window, and his face puck-

ered into a smile of satisfaction as he replied: "No need for jealousy! I like her very much indeed, I confess; but it would be better for her to come to me, rather than for me to go to her."

His tone was strange to her. She turned round. "Whom are you referring to?"

"That creature who arrived yesterday. That gay young spark, Rohan, is also making eyes at her, although, as I see, he has sent you flowers again to-day, and more than ever."

She turned away. He saw her calm face in the mirror, but he did not fail to notice that she put on a little more rouge than usual. He chaffed her unmercifully. "Feeling a little bit jealous about the handsome prelate? There's no need. It wasn't he either."

"Even if you said it was, I should not believe you," Lorenza's voice sounded weary. She went on speaking in monotonous tones: "He is a good man!"

"He is a skirt-hunter, like me, your Cardinal. But to set your mind at rest on that point, let me tell you that I know the man who disturbed our night. But he happened to mistake the door and landed in the bedroom of the Baroness Oberkirch. The old spinster was just putting on her nightdress. The bony, withered old nanny-goat, why couldn't she bolt her door! She would shrivel up the best will in the world! But she shrieked as if she were being roasted on a spit. And the disturber of her peace stole chastely away."

He roared with satisfaction, sprang to his feet, and hurried out of the room. The door banged to with a crash. With a faint smile Lorenza looked after him, half amused at his school-boy escapade, and half fearful of its consequences. Her maid had already told her about the fascinating Countess. And Giuseppe. . . .

Padrone sprang on to his mistress's lap, as she sat lost in thought. She stroked him. "And that is your master, Padrone." Again she was silent, and gazed wistfully into the cool surface of the mirror. "And that is my husband!"

An hour later groups of gaily-dressed people wandered out on to the great terrace. A lively and riotous popular festival was in full swing in front of the castle. Two bowers built of branches had been erected on the great lawn, and provided shelter for the guests. Inside there were huge baskets filled with bread, meat and other dainties for the refreshment of the hundreds of townfolk below, while two enormous casks of wine stood ready, from which all and sundry might obtain a copious supply of either red or white wine. Between the two bowers a tall pine mast had been set up, which seemed to reach to heaven, and its sides had been well greased. On the top of its slender summit hung a beautiful suit of clothes, to be the prize of whoever could reach it and bring it down. It was amusing to watch the many vain efforts on the part of the young men to obtain the coveted prize; but at last a fair curly-headed youth succeeded in doing so, and slid proudly down the mast with his spoil. A rattle of drums and flourish of trumpets proclaimed his victory. The scene had revived many memories of his youth in Cagliostro's breast. With the grave air of a connoisseur he watched every attempt, and when the victor set foot on earth again he sent him a gold piece and a bottle of Rhenish wine, bidding him choose whichever he preferred. The young Alsatian chose the wine. Whereupon the fat little man went to congratulate him in person on the propriety of his choice and gave him the gold piece into the bargain.

To the deafening strains of a brass band, the townfolk now began to dance on the green, and on the terrace the lords and ladies and gentlemen followed suit. With the grace of an eager bear, Cagliostro mingled among the village belles who shrieked with delight when he seized first one and then the other of them. He hopped and jumped about in the round dance, and with bear-like grace even tried to perform the slow waltz.

Jeanne had just been waltzing with the martial Baron de Planta, and was fanning herself to get cool. Suddenly the Marquise, her face covered with rouge, came affectionately up to her. "Not even a shadow under your eyes!" she exclaimed,

raising her lorgnettes and carefully examining Jeanne's face. "Oh, blessed youth! By the bye, quite between ourselves," and she leant tenderly towards Jeanne's coral ear, "didn't I arrange things splendidly in getting Nicolas installed in the bachelors' quarters?" Jeanne nodded, and a slight flush suffused her features as she gave the Marquise an eloquent look. But the old lady could no longer brook uncertainty. "But, dearest, which of them was it? The Cardinal—or Count Cagliostro?"

Countess de la Motte of the royal blood of the Valois bowed her captivating head, covered in blushes of shame. Her disappointment over the virtuous night she had spent drove her to adopt the diplomatic trick of the open door, and she lisped, "Count Cagliostro is too fat."

This might mean anything. The Marquise nodded sympathetically. She would have given much to hear more precise details, and with a sly look she threw out one more teeny, weeny, little hint. "Yes, yes, I see, the Cardinal!"

"A charming host!" Jeanne replied, and curtsied much too low to Baroness Oberkirch, who gave her a careless nod as she passed.

The birthday dinner at midday was a disappointment to Jeanne. As if the events of the previous evening had never taken place, she had to content herself with sitting with her grumpy pale-faced husband, and was, moreover, seated somewhere at the end of the table. Cagliostro never even looked at her, while Rohan brought a beautiful fair-haired woman to table, and devoted his attention almost entirely to her throughout the meal. Jeanne gnashed her teeth with rage—it was Countess Cagliostro.

But her hour came after the feast. In the afternoon Rohan remembered his promise to give her an audience. He received her in the presence of the Marquise. Jeanne surpassed herself. So touching was her tale, that again and again the Marquise was obliged to put her handkerchief to her eyes; for she, the motherly benefactress, played such a noble part in the

young woman's romantic memoirs, that she could have sworn on oath that things had happened precisely as auburn-haired Jeanne described them.

When at last Jeanne drew to a close and with the impulsive ardour of a child pressed her lips upon the Cardinal's beautiful hand, the Marquise, with the most winning of smiles and in a voice, the tenderness of which was perhaps a trifle exaggerated, added a few words conveying the gist of what the two women expected of him.

Meantime the Cardinal had been wondering whether the disturbance of the previous night had not had some connection with Cagliostro and the young woman before him. If this were so, well—it had always been his policy to stand by the fair ladies of his friends' acquaintance, no matter what their troubles might be, whether great or small. He understood only too well what the two ladies wanted him to do. The beautiful one did not want to vegetate in Luneville any longer. It was a matter of securing promotion for her husband and having him transferred to Paris. He remembered the King's brother, who would certainly do him this service. But he had to smile to himself when he thought of the amorous storms which the young woman would raise in Paris. He therefore enquired courteously: "Would your husband be satisfied with a captaincy in Monsieur's regiment of Dragoons?"

Breathlessly Jeanne enquired: "Are they stationed in Paris?"

The Prince's lips curled faintly as he replied: "You may take it for granted, Madam, that I would not banish you to the provinces."

Jeanne's eyes gleamed. She was satisfied. In a tone of innocent banter the Cardinal added: "But it seems to me that we are dividing the skin without consulting the bear. Would it not be as well to fetch Monsieur de la Motte?"

Jeanne frowned. But the Marquise had already risen to her feet. "I will go myself and fetch dear Nicolas, and inform him of his good fortune." So saying she cast a significant glance at Jeanne and took her departure.

The brief silence that followed was broken by Rohan, who spoke with friendly irony. "Don't you think you ought also to consult Cagliostro, or are you certain he will agree?" And he smiled.

"I don't need any guardian, Monseigneur," she answered caustically.

He looked at her in astonishment. "I thought he was your friend."

"I have a prejudice against the secret sciences," she protested. "To me they always savour a little of the big drums at the fair. And Cagliostro. . . ." She stopped. Rohan was gazing thoughtfully at her. Was this outburst genuine, or did the fair lady imagine that she would thus conceal the fact that all sorts of secret sciences had been practised by herself and the Master on the previous night? His answer was, therefore, kindly meant. "Well, go on with what you were saying. And Cagliostro . . . ?"

The shrewd little wasp, however, had not followed his line of thought, and she exclaimed somewhat too emphatically: "I do not trust him."

Oh, could Cagliostro, after all, have made her any promise? Had the two already gone so far?—the handsome prelate smiled indulgently. "A very typical fault in a woman; but one that is easily accounted for in the circumstances." Joyfully Jeanne interposed, "Monseigneur, you think I am right? Oh, I knew you would, the moment I cast eyes upon you. A Rohan is not so easily caught napping."

The vulgar expression offended the Cardinal. "You make use of quaint expressions, Madam. Caught napping! No, but then you see I am not a woman." His manner had stiffened, and he looked upset. With perfect blue-eyed simplicity Jeanne, who was now half aware that she had made a mistake, proceeded to lisp childishly: "I am afraid of him; either his magic is the work of the devil," and so saying she crossed herself like a pious child, which forced a reluctant smile from the Cardinal,

“or—” and here she managed to pause significantly—“or else it looks as if he were playing with us.”

A fresh access of displeasure flushed the Cardinal's cheeks. “He only wants to guide us all for our own good,” he said sternly, “even you as well.” Jeanne, taken aback, dropped her eyes, and stammered timidly, “But what about his beautiful wife? It seems to me he doesn't love her.”

“The Countess is an angel,” said Rohan, in a voice both steady and grave. “And your fears in regard to Count Cagliostro are wholly without foundation.”

Jeanne sprang to her feet. “Oh, if that is so, then I must lose no time in going to the Count to beg his pardon for my wayward suspicions. Monseigneur will excuse me. Repentance comes first!”

As lightly as a child she tripped out of the room. Mollified, the Cardinal looked after her. But hardly had she closed the door behind her than she clenched her fist. “You and your angel! But wait a moment! I'll upset your apple cart.”

There was no need for her to search. She made straight for Cagliostro's suite and knocked at the first door she found. Fortune came to her assistance, the stars meant well by her. Cagliostro snorted a fierce: “Come in!”

Directly after the feast, Cagliostro, exhausted by the joys of the table, had retired to the privacy of his rooms and had immediately fallen fast asleep on the broad low couch. When he awoke the sun was already setting. Could the little woman already have been to him? What a crying shame if she had not dared to wake him! He stretched himself happily. He knew for certain that she would come. And at that very moment he thought he heard a light and springy step approach.

A hard disdainful smile curved his lips, and raising himself on his elbows, he stared steadily at his visitor. His smile grew into a crooked grin. “Oh, there she is, is she, the little witch!” he exclaimed, and pouting voluptuously, he lay back and held out his arms.

Jeanne stepped up to him and looked pleased. “Why did

you try to break into the Baroness's room last night?" He merely gave her a jocular wink. The fine cockatoo which, till that moment had been asleep on its perch, woke up and shrieked a mild expletive. Cagliostro laughed. Jeanne frowned, and tried hard to be serious. "Stand up, Count Cagliostro, I wish to speak to you."

He snorted discontentedly. "Then you must help me to get up. During the last few years I have grown a bit heavy, my little gazelle." She shook her head derisively. "So that you can catch hold of me and pull me down to you? No thank you! I'll see you presently." And turning round like a flash she made as if to go.

He caught her at the door, clasped her in his muscular arms, and kissed her eagerly. Her faint resistance was soon overcome; her cheeks turned pale with excitement, and she closed her eyes. Noisily he locked the doors, and lifting her up like a toy, carried her back to the couch. She threw her arms round his neck.

An hour later she glided cautiously from the room. Halting at the door, she stood for a moment deep in thought, and then in her usual ringing voice, she exclaimed: "We are going to Paris!" Carelessly he grunted: "I spoke to him about it." She chuckled. "Then you must also be aware that I shall expect to see you in Paris, Alexandre!" He laughed, and passed a hand through his ruffled locks. "If in the meantime you have not been locked up in the Salpêtrière!" She laughed mirthlessly, and drawing back the bolt, flitted out. The door closed with a loud bang.

The cockatoo puffed out its feathers and croaked metallically: "*Mort de ma vie!*"

The Sicilian grunted contentedly in reply, and placing a bottle to his lips drank the contents with a gurgle of satisfaction. Then wiping his lips with the back of his hand, he expectorated and laboriously pulled himself up. A cloud seemed to be hovering about his head, and looking out of the window into the

gathering dusk outside, he muttered peevishly, "Giuseppe, and what if she proves to be thy ruin?"

"That is just what she will be!" an icy voice exclaimed from the darkest corner of the room. "*Maledetto!*" and with a harsh cry Cagliostro swung round. A tall thin man in black stepped out of a recess. His complexion was a darkish brown, and his eyes seemed to pierce through the fat Italian, as he fumbled for his sword.

The stranger bowed courteously, and in precise and frigid tones pronounced the three words which made Cagliostro's blood run cold: "*Lilium pedibus destrue!*"

"Thomas Ximenez!"

The Spaniard put a finger to his lips. "Don't mention any names!" Cagliostro fell back exhausted on a chair. "What do you want?"

The dark visitor almost transfixed him with his eyes. "The time is ripe."

The room pulsed with suppressed excitement. The fat little man brushed the sweat from his brow. "Speak!" said the Spaniard ironically. "Follow me! We must leave for Strassburg immediately. Two horses are standing waiting for us at the park gates." Cagliostro stammered: "May I at least take leave of my wife?"

The Spaniard scanned his terrified features with an expression of scorn. "You will take leave of no one, Giuseppe Balsamo; for to-morrow you will be here again. You must not even wish good-bye to your fascinating shepherdess. By the bye, allow me to congratulate you; she might turn out to be a second Madame de Cahouet. And now let us be off!" He noticed Cagliostro's hesitation. "You may take both your pistols and your sword and, as far as I am concerned, you may take some rat poison if you like. You can leave your money at home. Quick! Up you get!"

Cold as ice, he glided ahead like a shadow, and Cagliostro, almost paralysed with fear, followed behind. The twilight merged into night.

No sooner had he reached the park gates than Cagliostro recovered his composure. He was not a good rider, but, despite his corpulence, he pulled himself up into the saddle quite nimbly, and looked on with a gratified smile while the Spaniard's horse kicked and lunged out with his back legs. A minute later they were on the high road, and riding at a fast trot towards Strassburg. Neither spoke a word. Beech woods and vineyards slipped past them in the darkness.

They could already discern the lights of the city in the distance, when the stranger slackened his horse's speed, and coming close up to Cagliostro, snarled, almost angrily: "As a proof of my confidence in you, I shall not blindfold you." With undisguised scorn the Sicilian interrupted him. "Blindfold or not, I cannot see an inch before me as it is. You don't seem to be aware, Senor, that night has fallen since we started."

The Spaniard was silent for a moment, and then he observed drily: "You seem to be feeling much better already." Cheerfully the imperturbable Italian rejoined: "Remember, sir, that the bravest might lose his breath, if he discovered that an eavesdropper had overheard his secret love-making."

The Spaniard clicked his tongue, and they rode on, this time across fields and over stubble and ditches. Behind some trees there was a gleam which seemed to come from a carefully shaded light, and they drew near to an isolated farmstead. The Spaniard whistled, and a masked man opened the door. They dismounted and stepped into a comfortably furnished house. In the library they found a cold supper awaiting them. After the hard ride through the cold Cagliostro felt hungry and ate heartily of the meal. His host plied him generously with wine, but hardly touched anything himself.

During the meal, Cagliostro took stock of the room. The library made a gloomy impression. A great globe attracted his attention, for the face that was turned towards him was stuck all over with pins bearing red and black flags. Ximenez noticed the visitor's interest in the globe and explained: "That shows the division of forces. The red are ourselves, the black,

our enemies." Cagliostro snorted, as he went on contentedly gnawing the wing of a fat turkey: "Very instructive! But if I might make so bold as to ask, who are 'ourselves' and who are our 'enemies'?"

"Patience!" hissed the Spaniard. "That you will be told below!" The Italian gave a belch of satisfaction. "Below. Very good!" He allowed nothing to disturb him, and drank his fill. Suddenly, however, a thought occurred to him and, propping his knife and fork upon the table, he looked thoughtfully at his companion. "This evening, in referring to the female who happened to be in my room, you mentioned a certain name. Who was Madame de Cahouet, by the way?" The Spaniard was busy picking his teeth. "An extremely gifted person." Cagliostro, his face all aglow, smacked his lips benevolently. "I can readily believe it."

Ximenez scrutinised him thoughtfully. "It was well known that the Queen of France was frivolous and eternally in debt. Now Madame de Cahouet induced the Farmer General of Taxes to fall in love with her, and knowing that his ambition was to have a title, she led him to believe that the Queen wanted to borrow a large sum, of which the parsimonious King was to know nothing. The Farmer General demanded a written note in the Queen's hand. Madame de Cahouet then proceeded to forge the Queen's handwriting, and obtained large sums from the man. But to cut a long story short, she ended badly. The Salpêtrière, as you know, is not a very pleasant abode for a beautiful woman."

Cagliostro nodded. "And now you suggest that. . . ."

The Spaniard gave a hollow laugh. "Your fascinating friend has just the gifts which might enable her to follow in Madame de Cahouet's glorious footsteps. Be prudent and do not allow yourself to be dragged into her game. Rohan is stupid and ambitious. If Madame de la Motte goes about her business intelligently, she will find it quite easy to involve the gallant Cardinal in a very shady adventure. Truth to tell, there is

nothing we should like so much; but it is not in our interest that Count Cagliostro should be caught in the trap as well."

Sapristi! thought Count Cagliostro to himself meanwhile, the fellows do indeed know a great deal; but what is it they want to get out of me? He flung his napkin on the table, and thrust out his iron chin. "And now may I be allowed to ask. . . ."

Bearing a lantern in his hand the Spaniard led the way across the courtyard and through the little garden, at the end of which there was a sort of artificial grotto, but feebly illuminated by a small blue lamp. A strong wind blew up; the black trees rustled mysteriously; the Spaniard pressed a button, and the stone block barring the way moved aside, and revealed a staircase leading below the ground. They descended fifteen steps, and reached a heavy steel door, which opened noiselessly and admitted them into a circular room the walls of which were covered with black hangings. In the middle of the strange room there stood on a high pedestal a large iron chest, with a chair on either side of it, and a number of round Turkish smoking tables. A coffee set and some bottles of liqueur lent the cold room a certain air of comfort.

"You know my tastes," observed Cagliostro fervently. "I already feel quite at home."

With a resolute expression the Spaniard opened the various locks of the chest, which contained books and parchments. He withdrew a book bound in vellum, which looked like a missal, and, opening it, showed Cagliostro the first page. It was inscribed with blood.

"We the Grand Masters of the Knights Templar and of Freemasonry according to the Egyptian rites of the Stern and Lofty Observance, together with the Illuminati, have joined together for the purpose of exterminating all despotic monarchs, putting an end to all monarchies, overthrowing the tyranny of Rome, emancipating the enslaved lower classes, and inaugurating the Golden Age, no matter by what means—blood, the sword, persuasion or cunning. We hereby pledge ourselves

to render absolute obedience to the will of the majority, and take the oaths of inviolable secrecy. Any of our number who shall violate this pact will straightway be cast alive into prison and will die the death of the traitor."

But what followed was even more astonishing; for beneath this declaration came the signs and signatures of the Grand Masters, first among them being Alessandro, Count Cagliostro. The Spaniard smiled when he saw the Italian's face: "You have a right to be surprised," he remarked coldly, "but we could not arrange it differently. We could not possibly omit you. You may take the little book home with you without misgiving to study. There are one or two splendid things in it." And he solemnly closed the chest. "But forgive me now, Senor Balsamo, if I should be a trifle long-winded and tedious."

Cagliostro was fascinated. The Spaniard's insolence and dignity pleased him. He swallowed a large glass of brandy, glanced once more at his signature, and observed affably: "And now I almost feel as if it really were my signature."

Ximenez nodded. "Bravo! We felt the same when we put it in the list."

Then taking a seat he continued with great gravity: "Giuseppe Balsamo, I am the son of a tinker, and ran away from the Jesuits. You are the son of a petty tradesman and ran away from the Benfratelli. Our names stand at the head of the list of signatures; for I am the Grand Master of the Illuminati. I merely mention these facts in order to show you that we care nothing about a man's origin. Ever since you joined that London Lodge we have been following your career. It is brilliant—all the more so seeing that you had to make your way alone, without the support of our Order. Not one of us believes in your *materia prima*, your elixir, and the rest of your humbug; but on the other hand we have learnt to appreciate you as a genius who can play on the eternal stupidity of mankind as upon an instrument you know well. Senor Balsamo, you have a claim on our highest respect."

Cagliostro sat, purple with delight, twiddling his thumbs. Here at last was a man who understood him!

The Spaniard continued: "You will play a part in the world which will be ten times more important if only you are one of us. And this is what this declaration means. You can no longer turn back, Balsamo. Your only alternative is to continue your journey with us, or. . . ." And the Spaniard made a rapid gesture as if he were severing the head from his body.

Cagliostro replied with a burst of loud and honest laughter.

The Spaniard nodded sharply. "I see that you understand me. I think I may promise you that one day you will play a great part in our midst. Thanks to a natural phenomenon, which is quite unaccountable, you possess a quality which makes you invaluable as a leader—you believe in yourself and in your lucky star." He paused. "And then there is also your mysterious magnetism. . . ."

By now, however, Cagliostro had grown weary of the long speech and wanted to get in a word himself. So he abruptly interrupted his companion. "I know all that, and I know a good deal more. You command a fund of two million pounds a year, quite apart from your vast accumulated capital. You run an excellent service of couriers, and have your emissaries in every part of the world. But let me get to the point: you need me in order to free yourselves from all the sentimental rubbish in your statutes, the welfare of humanity and so on. You want power, and to that end you need me, so that you can push me to the front and get behind me. But what if I should refuse?"

The Spaniard rose. "We must strike the decisive blow before we show ourselves. France is ripe for it. Unrest and disaffection are fermenting in the land. Go to the south of France and start a revolution there. We will allow you four years to accomplish this."

"And then?" said Cagliostro, scrutinising him with some amusement.

The Spaniard took a deep breath. "You ought to know that! Paris *Lilium pedibus destrue*. The lily of the Bourbons is defiled with dust and dirt. Stamp the lily under your heel." His voice shrieked like a falling iceberg.

Cagliostro sat calmly thinking the matter over and casting loving eyes on a goodly bottle at his side. "Excellent!" he exclaimed with lukewarm enthusiasm. "That is all very well! But what if I should have an even better plan?"

"*Lilium pedibus destrue!*" repeated the Spaniard stubbornly.

"But what if I should happen to know how we can put Rome in our pockets, and that without any loss of blood, but with all the greater cunning?" And Cagliostro snorted with joy.

The Spaniard stared at him. "That," he stammered at last, "that . . . may be worth discussing."

"Well, well," said Cagliostro, who now seemed to be entirely absorbed in his bottle, "in four years from now we shall have plenty of time to discuss that matter." And he put the bottle to his lips.

When, an hour later, Cagliostro, pleasantly drunk, was riding back to Saverne under a solemn starlit sky, to which, incidentally, he paid no manner of heed, he was obsessed only by one thought, which he repeated to himself with a shrill whistle that rent the calm peace of the night. They have drawn very much closer, have those two million pounds! Oh Power, Oh Power, Oh unlimited Power!

The fact that these fellows might not be playing a straight game with him was always possible. But there would be time enough to think about that, when things had gone a little further. With two million pounds before his eyes, and a bright horizon full of power, Giuseppe feared nothing on earth.

The woods hummed mysteriously in the warm night. Hollow rang the hoofs of his horse on the hard road. He rode along in a dark cloud of happiness.

Paris

NIGHT had fallen. The lights of Paris glimmered in the distance, and the snow, falling in loose, downy flakes, melted in the mud beneath the horses' hoofs and the wheels of the carriages. It was the 30th of January in the year 1785.

With eager curiosity Cagliostro thrust his head out of the coach window. He made a sign and the procession formed. Gaily dressed men climbed out of the six carriages. Two heralds, resplendent in brocade, blew a deafening blast on their trumpets, and set themselves at the head of the procession. Behind them, in solemn array came lancers, couriers, and lackeys, all clad in the azure and silver livery which were Cagliostro's colours.

Whenever Cagliostro approached Paris, he suffered from a kind of stage-fright and his heart thumped furiously. This city, he was well aware, was destined to be his doom. Spread out before him, she lay shimmering in all her greatness. To the right lay the suburbs of Montmartre and the Temple, straight in front was the suburb of St. Antoine, and to the left, along the banks of the Seine, much swollen by the recent rains, the suburbs of St. Marcel, St. Michel and St. Germain. The towers of St. Geneviève, the patron Saint of Paris, loomed black against the darkening sky, and in the distance in misty grandeur rose the stony beauty of Notre Dame.

"Make way! Make way!" They were now driving through the suburb of St. Antoine, and rattling across the bridge over the Seine. About them were lofty houses, brilliantly lighted shops, and crowds of people all astir. "Make way! Make way!" and

with much shouting and clattering they drove through the avenue of staring onlookers to the Rue St. Claude. The gloomy shadow of the Bastille fell across them, as they turned into the Boulevard St. Antoine across which the Rue St. Claude cut at right angles. Cagliostro lived in the corner house, in the mansion belonging to the Marquise d'Orvilliers. He had rented it in order not to be too far away from the handsome prelate's house, la Maison de Strasbourg, in the Rue Vieille du Temple.

The clocks were chiming the hour of eight. From the windows of the two-storeyed house, with its projecting windows and broad balconies, hidden by a belt of old trees, cheering and comforting lights were streaming. Through the crevices in the lofty windows on the first floor, the glimmer of the smelting furnaces could be seen. Benito, the precious youth, must have suspected something.

The procession of carriages drove into the solemn and gloomy courtyard. Inside the stuccoed arch of the entrance gate, a stone staircase, with a balustrade of wrought iron, led upstairs. In front of this stood Benito, posing picturesquely as *major domo*, brandishing two lighted candlesticks above his head. His expression was full of cunning and his little eyes were no more than black slits.

He bowed low before Lorenza, as clad in heavy furs and followed by her maid, she made her way to the house. He threw open the door on the ground floor and a warm flood of light welcomed the travellers. Then he accompanied his lord and master to the first floor, where the laboratory, the magic closet, and the other apartments of the Great Orient were situated. The magic closet, which, in addition to the Masonic symbols that hung conspicuously on its walls, was stylishly and richly appointed, was brightly lighted with numerous candles. A fire burned in the grate, and on the table beside a comfortable armchair a decanter of steaming mulled wine, emitted a warm red glow. Benito grinned. Cagliostro gave him a clout of recognition. "How did you know, you rascal, that we were coming back to-day?"

Benito shook his head eagerly. "Mæstro, you will hear everything in a moment; but first of all I must know whether I am to prepare a bath, and what the Countess would like for supper."

Cagliostro threw off his fur coat, dropped into an armchair by the fire, enjoyed the mulled wine for a minute or two in silence, and then made a sign with his head. "Supper? As far as I am concerned, I shall go out. And what's that—a bath? Now mind!—no innovations! Bring me some clean linen, my black velvet coat, and shave me."

Even before Cagliostro had drunk the decanter to the dregs, Benito was back again. In the twinkling of an eye, the smart youth had conjured up brandy, champagne, and a rich cold supper of oyster patties, cold turkey, and a fresh pineapple. While Benito was undressing his master, wrapping him in his warm quilted dressing-gown, shaving him and dressing him again, Cagliostro partook of these good things with great gusto. Chewing and smacking his lips the while, he let fall one or two significant words. "Our wheat is flourishing, Benito! You already know the brilliant success I had in Bordeaux; for I came here often enough during that period. But even in Lyons just now my good luck did not forsake me." Then stretching out the first and little finger of each hand, he expectorated three times. Benito imitated the superstitious procedure with the minutest accuracy. "In Lyons I founded the Egyptian Mother Lodge of Triumphant Wisdom, and am now the Master of more Lodges than France has bishoprics. The crowd of my disciples increases day by day, and is already a small army."

Benito licked his lips. "A finer army than most armies, *caro mæstro*; for its soldiers are ready to pay for the honour of serving you."

Cagliostro winked affably and said, "But you have not yet told me how you came to know that we should arrive this evening."

The cunning youth stepped back respectfully, crossed his

arms oriental fashion over his breast, bowed solemnly, went silently over to an antique writing-desk, and took a number of letters from a secret drawer. Then laying these with the grandezza of a high priest upon a silver salver, he at last handed them to his master. "All these came to-day," he explained, "the top one only an hour ago. The messenger who brought it said that your lordship would be here in a moment, and should be the first to read the letter."

Cagliostro examined the letter suspiciously. The writing was unknown to him. "What did the messenger look like?" Benito gave his master a cunning glance. "That is just the point, he didn't look like anything. All of a sudden he stood in the middle of the room and had a black mask over his face."

This must obviously be another masonic message, thought Cagliostro, somewhat upset as he tore open the letter. "*Lilium pedibus destrue*. You have not abided by the terms we imposed upon you. But we are satisfied with your activities. Thanks to you Bordeaux and Lyons are in the throes of a revolution. You will go no later than to-night to Brother and Grand Master Baudard de St. James, Treasurer-in-Chief of the Navy, in the Place Vendôme, and receive further instructions from him."

Cagliostro threw the letter angrily on the table. He would take instructions from no one. He had not the remotest intention of going there to-night. The letter fluttered into the fireplace and Benito looked on disappointed while the flames consumed the secret he had hoped to discover.

The second letter was from the Cardinal who, for the last month, had been sending courier after courier to Cagliostro, imploring him to come to Paris as quickly as possible. This time Benito was more careful. Quietly he crept behind the back of his master's armchair and read as he read: "Dear Master, my one and only Friend! I was pleased to hear that you intended leaving Lyons on the 27th. You will therefore be here on the 31st. I beseech you to come to me before you call on anyone else. The matter I wish to discuss with you

is of the utmost importance, and one which cannot help affecting the whole of my future. I implore you not to delay for a moment. It matters not whether you come by day or by night, you will be heartily welcome."

Benito chuckled. Cagliostro did not trouble to turn round, but simply stamped his foot. "Haven't I already told you a thousand times, you rascal, that you must not look over my shoulder when I am reading anything? It is a most improper proceeding, you son of a she-ass!" Once more Benito assumed his respectful Oriental attitude, and in a soft innocent voice enquired: "Will your lordship want the cabriolet?"

The Master's chin was thrust forward. "Ass! As if I did not know better than to fling myself into the arms of the prince! Let him wait. I am only in Paris to-morrow morning. Cagliostro has not the remotest intention of responding to the first sign. Concerning what he should do and what he should leave undone, he has his own personal views, my Lord Cardinal, his own extremely personal views, Senor Ximenez!" The iron jaws closed with a defiant snap, as if they were warning off an antagonist, and he flung the letter contemptuously to the floor.

But one more extremely dainty envelope still lay on the salver, and with its mass of white lilies stamped on a blue ground, it struck Cagliostro as most attractive. He did not know the handwriting; but the lilies seemed to arouse certain associations. He had been expecting it. He smiled and handed the letter to Benito. "Read it out!" he said carelessly. Highly delighted Benito seized the letter and after sniffing the envelope and rolling his eyes ecstatically he read it aloud with true Neapolitan emphasis.

"My friend! Do you still remember that afternoon in Saverne? I have already forgotten all about it. I have heard about all you have done meanwhile from our dear prince. I cannot unfortunately invite you here, as I am alone. Monsieur de la Motte is away on a journey for a day or two."

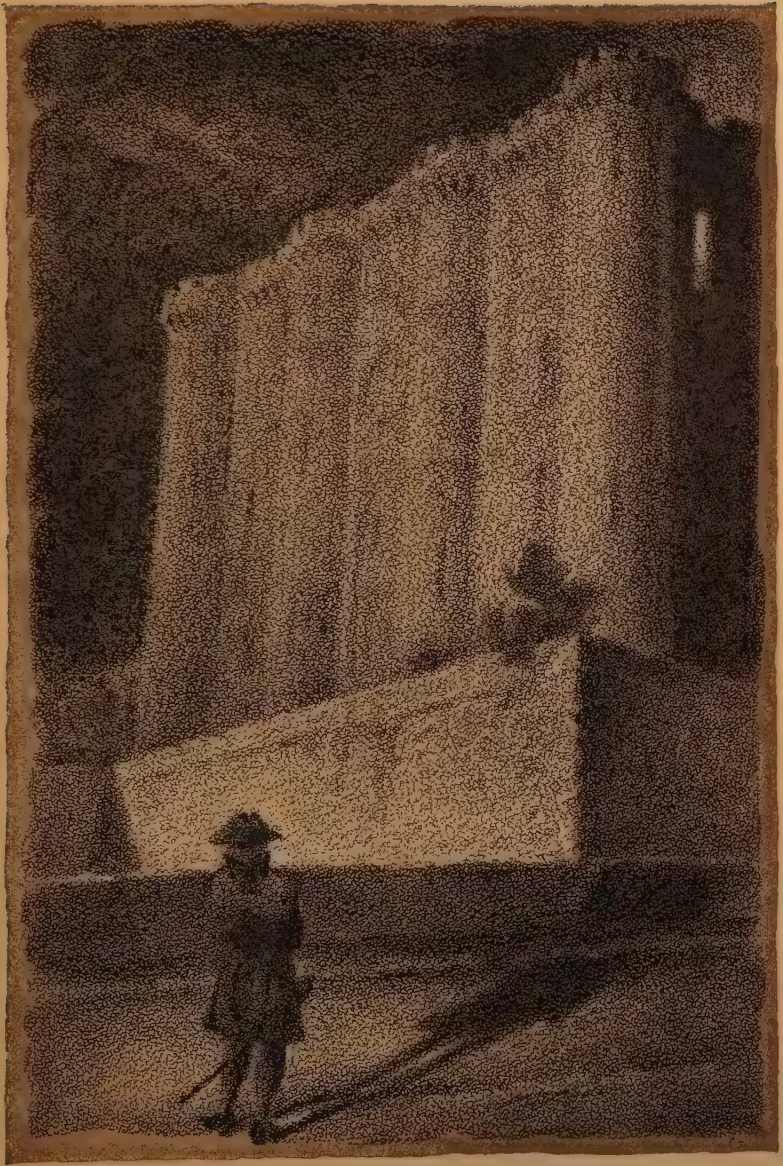
To the deuce with the Mother Lodge of Triumphant Wis-

dom! The tiny spark in Cagliostro's blood grew into a slowly surging flame, fed and fanned by a supple young woman with auburn hair. The moment of danger had arrived. How often had he not called the Spaniard's warning to mind! He was strongest when alone.

Suddenly Jeanne, in all her feline grace stood before him as it were in the flesh, and his fierce Sicilian lust, so long restrained by his greed of power and gold, instantly overpowered him and took his breath away. Benito observed him with some curiosity. So there was someone after all, who was justified in assuming that the Master would respond to the first sign. *Santo porco!* what a bewitching creature she must be to succeed in kindling so many darkling flames in that hard and resolute bull-dog countenance! A Princess perhaps? *Maledetto!* But in any case a charming little pink and white chick. Benito grinned benevolently.

"My fur coat!" The Sicilian took one or two strides round the room, breathing heavily. He felt certain that his fate now lay in the balance. On one side were Rohan and Ximenez; on the other Jeanne, whom he desired, and whom he feared. And as he feared her, he went to her.

Whenever Cagliostro, for whatever reason, found himself forced to walk down the Boulevard St. Antoine, he was always overcome with a feeling of faint discomfort. At the end of the long street stood the dark and threatening mass of pitiless stone known as the Bastille. But to-day an oily smile played about his thick lips. He passed by the house in which, once upon a time, Ninon de l'Enclos had lived—that beautiful sorceress who must surely have discovered some rejuvenating mixture, for when she was seventy she had been just as seductive and passionate as when she was twenty-one. For the first time in his life, he became conscious of the fact that the street was named after St. Anthony, the poor fellow who had been obliged to resist so many temptations. Ninon and St. Anthony! Sicily laughed with all its heart. How funny! He wondered whether



AT THE END OF THE LONG STREET STOOD THE DARK AND
THREATENING MASS OF THE BASTILLE

he too would now have to play the part of a sorely tried martyr, seeing that he was on the way to his Ninon.

He did not have to go far. She lived in the same quarter as he did, in the Rue Neuve St. Gilles, opposite the little portico of the monastery of the Minims. It was an imposing looking house, three storeys high, and its tall narrow windows were encased in florid wrought-iron gratings. He ascended the cold stone steps, the iron balustrade of which was surmounted by fine lilies in wrought iron. *Lilium pedibus destrue!* He could not help smiling. The lily which he was destined to stamp in the dust also figured in Jeanne's coat of arms.

He took a deep breath and rang the bell. A saucy little chambermaid of eighteen, with coal black eyes and a little snub nose opened the door and regretfully informed him that her ladyship the Countess could not see him. Cagliostro brushed her aside. "Tell her Count Cagliostro is here!" Her exclamation of surprise made him look up. She was gazing at him with unfeigned admiration. "I hope your lordship will not mind waiting for a minute or two, as Madame was just preparing for bed." Thereupon she threw open the drawing-room door.

It was a lofty room with white panelled walls, and had two windows which reached to the ceiling. Above the mantelpiece stood a large double mirror, with a gilt frame richly carved. A valuable white marble clock supporting a statuette representing Sensitiveness stood in front of it, and on either side was a fine Sèvres vase. The walls were hung with a material resembling Gobelin tapestry. The furniture consisted of a couch and armchairs with oval backs, upholstered in figured satin, representing romantic scenes from Lafontaine's fables. On the floor lay a large Aubusson carpet and a heavy chandelier of gilt bronze hung from the ceiling.

Cagliostro surveyed the room in astonishment. Everything in it savoured of wealth. But where could the money come from? He knew that the only possessions of the de la Mottes

consisted of debts. Was it possible that the gallant Cardinal had after all taken a fatherly interest in the charming wasp?

Jeanne slipped in noiselessly. She wore a dove-grey wrapper over a pink undergarment. Her hair was loose, and hung in attractive short locks over her half-naked shoulders. She gave him her most fascinating smile, and holding out her tiny hand begged him to be seated, at the same time curling herself up in a corner of the couch. Cagliostro examined her closely, and his eyes wandered slowly over her person. Jeanne crouched under his gaze like a cat about to spring, but she uttered not a word. Then looking at her almost angrily, he demanded in a harsh voice: "Am I not gallant?"

Her laugh sounded quite unembarrassed. She guessed that he wanted to leave her to choose the subject of their conversation and to take the responsibility for it, but she did not hesitate a moment. "Have you had a pleasant journey, Master?"

He felt the touch of mockery in her words. "I received your letter, and came to see you. Am I not gallant?" She answered cheerfully: "That is exactly what I expected."

He frowned. "In your letter you referred to an afternoon in Saverne. How strange! I cannot remember anything special about it!" This sounded infernally Sicilian. Jeanne's bright laughter ended on a note of deepest understanding. "Have you had qualms of conscience, you Prince of Darkness?"

Cagliostro laid down his arms. He gurgled with delight. Verily she was the only woman on earth who was a match for him; and at that moment he felt himself inexpressibly drawn to her. Full of the same kindly feeling, he exclaimed: "Everything here has the appearance of wealth; what has happened—a legacy?"

Jeanne gave a knowing wink as though he had said something terribly indecent, and then raising a solemn finger she answered in sing-song tones: "By the grace of the Queen." Cagliostro looked up. "Do you mean me to infer that you know the Queen?" Jeanne who was playing with the tassel of

a large silk cushion, shrugged her shoulders carelessly, and observed sleepily: "An accident won me her Majesty's favour."

Scornfully Cagliostro ejaculated: "A fine accident!" But in her softest lullaby voice, Jeanne continued: "The accident by which I happened to faint in the *Galerie des Glaces* just in front of the Queen's windows. Her Majesty was gracious enough to notice me. A collection was made, my yearly allowance was doubled, and in the end she discovered that I was very nice and worthy of confidence."

He did not believe a word she said; but he admired her. Ximenez was right. There was the stuff in her for another Cahouet affair. He suddenly rose to his feet. "I am delighted to find that you are doing so well."

Madame de la Motte looked up at him in surprise. "You are not going?" Cagliostro regarded her mysteriously. "The Cardinal is expecting me." She did not stir. She merely smiled a courteous and friendly smile which revealed her little white teeth; nevertheless an expression of agitation lurked concealed in her eyes. "He is only expecting you to-morrow."

Cagliostro had been watching her closely, and now drew near and stood quite close to her. She grew very pale; her pupils dilated, and the expression in her eyes was tense. His fingers touched her skin, and wandered boldly over her neck. Limp and will-less, Jeanne lay in his arms. She closed her eyes as he gave her a long greedy kiss, and clinging closely to him she drank in the voluptuousness of his caresses. Cagliostro was panting when at last they fell apart. With a disgruntled air he strode to and fro across the floor. But the longer he did so, the more fiercely did his evil face grow wrinkled with mockery and cunning. A malicious grin revealed his powerful teeth. "What are you doing with Rohan?"

She had anticipated this question, and answered truthfully: "He needs me as a go-between." He appeared to be highly amused. "At Versailles?" Dreamily Jeanne replied: "Yes, that's it."

Cagliostro observed her intently. "Hence your easy cir-

cumstances?" She parried him skilfully: "The Queen in one of her letters begged the Cardinal for 50,000 francs for a certain noble family which, through no fault of their own, were living in poverty. The prince could not possibly refuse such a request. And the 50,000 francs are here." And she waved a hand as if to include all the contents of the room in one sweep. Cagliostro, enchanted, dropped into a chair. "You forget that I am his friend!" She looked up with an expression of alarm; but he saw at once that it was only a well-acted attempt to enter into his spirit. "You surely would not give me away? The Cardinal is no poorer for having got rid of 50,000 francs." Cagliostro yawned, and nodded agreement at the same time. "Quite true! But in view of his debts, the sum must have bled him pretty well. I shall have enough to do now to make up the loss for him."

It was now Jeanne's turn to look amused. "Is it really true that you have discovered the secret of making gold?" The fat little man looked insolently into her eyes and smiled. "That is not the only secret I know, my dearest."

A piercing look from beneath half-closed lids seemed trying as it were to penetrate into the very depths of his mind, but the words which the wasp sweetly murmured, as if to herself, were full of pouting innocence. "Now I see that you are not really a true friend, Count. You say you can make gold, and yet have not made any for your poor little friend Jeanne. . . ." The Sicilian's deep-set eyes flashed angrily. "Let me tell you another secret, Madam. I am not so self-sacrificing as people think. I do nothing for nothing."

Jeanne blushed attractively: "I thought that I had already paid." The iron chin was thrust out triumphantly. "I cannot remember when, Madam. In any case, it could only have been an instalment at most."

With an amused twinkle in her eye, she reached out for the bell and rang. The maid flitted into the room. "Rosalie, his lordship would like something to eat." This paragon of maids curtsied low and replied, "It is all on the table, Madame."

Snorting his approval, Cagliostro offered Jeanne his arm, and as he led her to the dining-room, his eyes, full of the tenderest emotions, dwelt on her face. She felt it and smiled.

By the dim light of a candle which was almost completely hidden by a dark pink shade, Countess de la Motte's face looked the acme of solemn depravity. She was sitting at a small inlaid bureau, pen in hand, and was scratching hurried lines on a piece of coarse writing paper in front of her. It was two o'clock in the morning, and the sleeping Sicilian's loud snoring could be heard in the adjoining room.

Although the white doors leading to the next room, the battlefield of Jeanne's mind and body, were peacefully closed, and although Cagliostro was sleeping happily, Jeanne was not alone. There was a man with her, who by no means enjoyed the privilege of being her husband. A strange nocturnal ghost haunted the boudoir of the Countess de la Motte in the Rue Neuve St. Gilles, and he did not even possess the charm of being exciting or particularly original, for he came every night without exception.

The nocturnal ghost was called Rétaux de Villette, and had formerly been a gendarme and a colleague of the worthy Nicolas. At that moment he was an intimate friend of the house, and Jeanne's private secretary.

After many years of separation, Nicolas and Rétaux had chanced to run into each other one day at the Palais Royal, that haunt of blasé men about town and loose women, when each had been in quest of a little adventure. Rétaux, as was his daily custom, had come to pick up some callous female companion, while Nicolas had come in search of a greenhorn from the country with whom he could play cards; for this had become his principal occupation. Although the Marquise de Boulainvilliers had supplied more than enough money to settle the debts of the ex-officer of Gendarmerie, it had been decided at a secret family conference to use the good round sum in setting themselves up in a manner befitting their station, and

in spending a year in Paris free of care. Thus, in spite of the Cardinal's recommendation, nothing had come of the captaincy in Monsieur's Regiment of Dragoons, and meanwhile the old Marquise had departed this life.

Rétaux who had been disinherited by his father, found himself in a similar situation. The son of the Director-General of the Assizes at Lyons, he knew how to cut a figure; for he was handsome, well built, not yet thirty, fair and blue-eyed, and endowed with the most perfect complexion. The girls of the town thought him enchanting. He could sing quite pleasantly; he wrote verses; he made them die of laughter with his imitations of Mademoiselle Contat of the Comédie Française, and to Jeanne's delight, his elocution was in every respect as good as that of her fickle Nicolas. Thus he was made use of by the family. In due course, however, it transpired that he would make an invaluable secretary; for not only could he imitate any handwriting to perfection, but was particularly gifted in reproducing a lady's script.

While Jeanne's pen was racing restlessly over the paper the dear fellow lay comfortably installed on the couch, consuming the remains of the evening meal. "You had a famous supper to-night," he observed at last.

Jeanne whispered irritably, "Hush! You'll wake him if you talk so loud." "He won't wake for another twelve hours," Rétaux replied unperturbed. "Didn't you put some of that wonderful mixture in his coffee?"

Jeanne laughed. "What an indefatigable creature! Instead of falling asleep he grew more and more lively. At last it was too much for me, and I gave him a double dose. And now he is lying there playing his music."

A shadow passed over Rétaux's face. "If only I had known that. . . ." Jeanne's voice rang like silver. "Just go and look at him, and then you won't feel jealous any longer, my love. What could I do? His whole mind was set on going to see the Cardinal."

Rétaux sprang to his feet. "God in Heaven!" Quite un-

perturbed Jeanne sprinkled the sand over her paper, and blew it away. "You see, before Cagliostro can speak to the Cardinal we must have the agreement in a safe place. The Italian would see through it all and warn Rohan."

Rétaux passed a hand over his brow. The very thought of it had made him break into a sweat. Jeanne surveyed him scornfully. "We have got a good start. If Cagliostro goes to the Cardinal now he will get there too late."

The words "too late" rang sharply through the silent, dimly-lighted room. Rétaux turned pale. Jeanne rose to her feet and continued in dry businesslike tones: "I have finished the rough draught. Have you got the paper?" Rétaux stepped up to the bureau and spread out one or two sheets of notepaper. She clapped her hands. "Beautiful! I think that will do excellently."

He nodded proudly, contemplating the paper with the vanity of an artist. "It took me a long time to think of the kind of paper I ought to choose and at last I selected this—ivory with a rich gold border. It looks royal enough!"

With this proud boast he took his seat at the bureau.

Full of care and anxiety they made their way to the *Maison de Strasbourg*, and paralysed with fear bore the little steel casket in which all their fortune and all their hopes reposed. Humbly they begged the majestic footman to announce their arrival to the Prince. What name? Messrs. Boehmer and Bassenge, Court Jewellers to Her Majesty the Queen of France. The servant nodded affably and conducted them to the small drawing-room, the *Salon des Singes*, as it was called, after the dainty designs on its walls representing rural scenes in the best Chinese style. They did not dare to sit down; the little salon seemed redolent of the sacred atmosphere of a church, and they awaited the arrival of the Cardinal in silence.

Karl August Boehmer's youth had been spent in a Saxon Ghetto, where he had learnt the first elements of the jewellery business and the lighter side of the goldsmith's art. The second

stage in his life had been spent in the Ghetto of Amsterdam, and here, in the first and most famous jewel market of the world the dark, emaciated little man soon met with some success; for he was a clever young fellow, quick-witted and full of enterprise. But it was impossible for him to gratify his ambition in Amsterdam, and he sought a more important field for the exercise of his gifts. This he found in the world metropolis of Paris, where the most brilliant court in the world had its seat; for Louis XV was endowed with a sixth sense for elegance and splendour. Here Karl August Boehmer found what he wanted, and very soon he became simply Charles Boëmer. Paris with its huge demand for skilled jewellers, where the enchanting neck of the du Barry alone would have sufficed to support a whole bevy of artists in this profession, was the place for him.

In Paris he went into partnership with his countryman, Paul Bassinger, who was an expert in the same lucrative art. He was a native of Leipsic who had made his way to Paris *viâ Frankfort* and had become a well-known figure in the gay city as the somewhat portly and constantly perspiring jeweller Bas-senge. The Saxon partnership had been crowned with success, and, in the end, so turned the head of the worthy Boehmer that he persuaded his weaker partner of the necessity of doing something conspicuous, which would draw the eyes of the whole world upon their firm.

And thus they laid their plans for a supreme effort. The du Barry had the most beautiful neck in the world, and it was only right that it should be adorned with the most beautiful necklace of the day. But no such necklace could be produced except by the two supreme artists, Charles and Paul, and it would have to consist of the finest diamonds they could find. The task of discovering these diamonds was not beyond the ingenuity of two such experienced Saxon knaves; their only difficulty was to raise the sum of something like seven hundred and fifty thousand francs required for the purchase of the stones. The two between them had not yet amassed such a fortune, but

Boehmer with his heart in his boots, screwed up the courage for a really magnificent gesture. "We shall simply borrow the money!" he exclaimed with regal confidence. Bassenge with a pale face agreed, although it seemed to him impossible to find anyone who would be prepared to lend them so colossal a sum.

But he was mistaken. Monsieur Baudard de St. James, the Treasurer of the Navy, one of their best customers, was ready to trust the worthy Saxons, and placed the money at their disposal at a fair rate of interest. Whereupon letters flew to Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Leipsic, Frankfort, Venice, Rome, Brussels, London, Madrid, and Constantinople, and very soon there were collected in the steel safes of the Boehmers, as they were generally known in Paris, the most precious diamonds in the world—the most fairylike splendour of cold sparkling flame.

For nearly two years they worked without ceasing at the production of the necklace. Boehmer knew that if only the du Barry would wear it on her dazzling neck, his darling wish, which was to be Court Jeweller to the French Crown, was bound to be fulfilled; and this title was worth many an ingot of gold.

At last the day dawned when the necklace was finished, the necklace which was to cost a million and a half of francs, and, to the Crown of France something even more precious—its head and neck. For months expert sappers had been at work, cutting subterranean passages to the du Barry, and laying seductive mines; and she, the heavenly queen of love, had already graciously acknowledged her readiness to do her best. But suddenly His Majesty with wanton wilfulness upset all their delightful calculations by dying of smallpox, caught as the result of an intrigue which was by no means in keeping with his station.

"*Mein Gott!*" wailed Boehmer, and Bassenge, unconsciously reverting to the language of his childhood, exclaimed: "*Weih geschrien!*" What was to be done now? Any further business on a large scale with the du Barry was now out of the question.

The little dukes had been short of money for ages; for the luxurious life at the Court of Versailles had bled the French aristocracy quite dry. Only kings could be thought of as likely customers.

Madrid, Lisbon and Naples regretfully declined. The price was too high. Bassenge began to sweat more than ever, while Boehmer grew ever thinner and thinner. At last, on the advice of their creditor, the Treasurer of the Navy, they summoned up courage to approach the Queen of France. Marie Antoinette cast covetous eyes upon the necklace; but fat Louis pulled a long face—what, so much money? Out of the question! Sadly the Queen took refuge in the touching phrase which almost made her popular: “France needs ships. Better one more ship than this jewel!”

Well satisfied, His Majesty returned to his clocks, which seemed to him much more interesting and easier to regulate than the tiresome machinery of a decrepit State. But as for Her Majesty the Queen, she wept long and bitterly on the bosom of her companion, Madame Campan. But nothing did any good—not even the fact that a year later Boehmer threw himself at the Queen’s feet and implored her, if she did not wish to purchase the necklace, at least to allow him to end his sorry existence in the waters of the Seine. Still Louis could not be persuaded to lay out the vast sum demanded for the jewel, and no considerate proposal for payment by a system of small instalments and yearly settlements could avail to soften his parched domesticated heart. No—no! Boehmer and Bassenge, it is true, were appointed Court Jewellers to Her Majesty the Queen, but the necklace, which was so big with fate, remained among their dead stock.

Oh, it was a dreadful age! Kings were no longer kings! No true king would love his wife parsimoniously and virtuously as though he were a petty greengrocer. A true king kept a brilliant mistress and never dreamt of tightening his purse-strings when it was a question of a little piece of jewellery. The Seine, it is true, went flowing on without the corpse of

Charles Boehmer in its waters, but the appalling sums that had to be paid in interest on the necklace began to affect his liver.

But thanks to a just God, who had of course seen how it stood with them, the Saxons' hour struck at last. A charming wasp, a royal wasp, of the sinful and corrupt blood of the Valois, buzzed haughtily into the office of the Boehmers. A purchaser had been found! With becoming awe they enquired who the wonderful patron might be.

"His Eminence the Cardinal Prince Rohan."

And here they were at the Maison de Strasbourg, to sign the contract and to deliver the necklace. For whom could he possibly be purchasing it? The necklace was a present fit for a Queen. No one would dream of giving it to a chance mistress who had inspired a passing passion. The mystery surrounding this purchase had occasioned the two jewellers no small amount of brain-racking cogitation.

Half an hour went by; they hardly dared to breathe. Was something going to happen after all which would put an end to the whole business? In the next room, the door to which was ajar, they heard voices. The Boehmers listened. The Cardinal was talking with a lady. And, to judge from her voice, she appeared to be the Countess, who had negotiated the purchase, but had refused to accept even the smallest gift for her trouble. "At six o'clock then!" said the woman's voice. "I shall be punctual, Madam!" replied the Cardinal. There was a short pause. Then suddenly the jewellers went pale and stared at each other aghast; for what had they just overheard? "I cannot repeat often enough, Monseigneur"—yes, these were the words the Countess had spoken, "how intensely distasteful the whole of this business is to me. I wish I had never heard about it."

God of Abraham and Moses! Evidently her words referred to the necklace! Bassenge broke into profuse perspiration, and Boehmer turned as yellow as a guinea. But with what joy did they hear Rohan's reply: "What is done is done, Countess. Don't upset yourself, and be assured that I shall

always be grateful to you." A fine gentleman; a great gentleman! . . .

"Now my dear friends," said Rohan in the best of humours, "let us conclude our business! I have a little document here which I am going to ask you to sign. Let me recapitulate: the necklace costs 1,600,000 francs, payable within two years, in four half-yearly instalments of 400,000 francs each, the first of which will fall due on the 1st of August of this year. But you will deliver the necklace to me no later than to-day."

A second and even deeper bow from the Boehmers confirmed the correctness of Rohan's statement. The Cardinal made a deprecating gesture. "And now, pray be seated, gentlemen; for I have certain information to give you under seal of the strictest secrecy. And I am sure you will take a pride in keeping it entirely to yourselves."

Obviously in high spirits, the Cardinal flung himself into a chair, and the Boehmers, assuring him of their absolute discretion, hastened to take the places pointed out to them. Rohan looked at them and his face beamed. "It is not I who am the purchaser of your necklace! I am only an intermediary. The real purchaser is—Her Majesty the Queen!"

Bassenge stared at him open-mouthed, while Boehmer muttered, "The Queen. . . ." without apparently being able to grasp what had happened. A charming boyish smile lent extraordinary attraction to Rohan's features. Joyfully he repeated: "The Queen! And here is the contract, which you, my friends, are to sign. Her Majesty has already signed it, and has written the word 'agreed' in the margin against every clause. But see! convince yourselves with your own eyes of your great good fortune." He unfolded a piece of ivory paper with a rich gold border covered with the most dainty writing, and held it aloft portentously. The Boehmers sprang to their feet and stared at the signature: plain, momentous and proud the name stood there—Marie Antoinette de France.

They remained silent and breathless. Holy Moses and the prophets! thought Karl August Boehmer, is that supposed to

be an ordinary contract? The Cardinal holds the honour of the Bourbons in his hand. Rohan let the paper drop, and smiled graciously. "One moment, gentlemen, I have just a few more words to say to you."

The shrewd Boehmer did not find it difficult to assume the customary air of servile affability; but Bassenge was so completely overcome that, with his attention riveted on the imposing signature, he almost sat down on the carpet. In clear and deliberate tones, Rohan continued: "You must understand, gentlemen, that the whole affair is absolutely private and must be kept a strict secret, for the Queen is buying the necklace without the King's knowledge. For this reason the Queen does not wish this promissory note to leave my hands. Gentlemen, I once more implore you to observe the strictest secrecy. One word too many—and it may cost you your heads!" The handsome prelate's voice rolled sonorously. "As far as Messrs. Boehmer and Bassenge are concerned I alone am answerable for the necklace, although to be quite frank I have no idea where I could find the money to pay for it."

They looked anxiously up at him, and he smiled affably. "Behold the lilies of the field,' is a remark you will find in your Bible; so do not have any anxiety, gentlemen. The immaculate white lily of the Bourbons cannot be doubted. And now just add your signatures; for I must get away. I am expected at Versailles to-day."

Their pens squeaked with excitement. Never, even in the fairy tales of their childhood, had they been told that they would one day be allowed to put their sign and seal to a document on which stood the sacred signature of Her Majesty the Queen of France!

Boehmer opened the steel casket. "Would your Eminence like to convince yourself of its genuineness?" Great coloured lights played on the casket. Massive and heavy, the necklace lay on the black velvet. Tongues of flame danced in the crystal of the chandelier, and in the narrow mirrors of the wonderful little salon. The Mandarins in the delicate Chinese frescoes

shook their heads thoughtfully, and the little bell in the painted pagoda seemed to ring a faint chime.

Rohan cast a hasty glance at the stones. "It is all right. I know you would not deceive me. Between ourselves, I do not like the necklace a bit; it is too massive and overloaded for my taste. But do not let that trouble you; for, after all, I am not the purchaser. *Au revoir*, gentlemen!"

With a look of indifference he closed the casket, and the room seemed suddenly to have grown darker. In all humility the jewellers took their leave. With the steel casket under his arm, Rohan left the room.

The little Salon des Singes was deserted. But the tiny bell in the painted pagoda still seemed to chime merrily; the mandarins still seemed to shake their heads silently and sagaciously, and a sound as if the wise East were giving a low melodious laugh echoed through the gathering twilight of the room.

The windows of the stately palace in the Place Vendôme were all dark. Baudard de St. James, the Treasurer of the Navy, the gayest man in Paris, and wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice, had refused to see any visitors that day, except Count Cagliostro, whom he was just accompanying to the door. A lackey bearing lighted candles preceded him as he walked back, lost in thought, through the dark empty rooms in the mirrors on whose vast walls he saw his own reflection faint and dim in the distance. On reaching his study he turned to the lackey. "You can go to bed, Baptiste; but tell the porter that I shall be at home to nobody else this evening."

Baudard de St. James was portly and of medium height. His face was fresh and full, his mouth looked jovial above his double chin. His quick black eyes never lost their benevolent expression. In Paris he had the reputation of being a "*bon garçon*." His dinners were famous. The nobility, high finance and the world of scholars, all frequented the society of this bachelor who had been so highly favoured by fortune, and was

endowed with an insatiable appetite for all that was good and expensive.

Baudard bolted the door behind him. His study, which was dimly lighted by candles burning beneath green silk shades, was furnished with the most valuable Boulle furniture, the mother-of-pearl inlay of which shimmered softly. No paper or book lay on the smoothly polished surface of his vast writing table. Thick carpets on the floor and rugs on the walls prevented any sound inside the room from being heard outside. Still lost in thought, Baudard went over to a door concealed in the panelling, and opened it cautiously. Gaunt, swarthy, piercing of eye, and with lips firmly set, Thomas Ximenez, the Grand Master of the Illuminati, stepped towards him. Baudard laid a finger to his lips. Ximenez glanced scornfully at a little table on which stood a number of empty bottles. Baudard chuckled: "There's no doubt about it, he can put it down, can our excellent Cagliostro! He could even drink one under the table."

Ximenez shook his head impatiently. "I don't like it! When a man is the worse for drink, he may lose control of himself, and blab things which no one ought to hear." Baudard sat down in an armchair, and took further stock of his guest. "You must not lose your temper, Senor Ximenez; or has what Cagliostro said to-night upset your arrangements?"

Gloomily the Spaniard rejoined: "In spite of his heavy drinking, what he said was so exemplary, that I could not help feeling suspicious. . . ." The portly Frenchman, much amused, interposed: "You mean that he suspected that other ears besides my own were listening to him?" The dark Spaniard nodded. With a slight frown, Baudard asked a further question: "What did he do when I left the room?"

The Spaniard dropped on to a stool and crossed his legs. "He merely drank more than ever. He is much more astute than we thought. We shall not get to the bottom of him in this way."

St. James shook his head. "I don't quite understand you, Ximenez. Was it not you who proposed to have him elected head of all the Orders of Freemasons?"

With a surly expression the gaunt fanatic gazed at the portly man of the world. "One is never certain of any man. Every man's thoughts are like a thick wood in the darkness of night. You ought to know that, Senor Baudard de St. James. You are risking your head, Senor. If Cagliostro blabs, or allows himself to be bribed, your neck will not be worth a farthing."

Baudard's rosy face was wreathed in smiles. "Hang it all, it will not be as serious as all that! The Count and the Queen herself are too deeply indebted to me for that, my good fellow. If I were seized too many secrets would come into the light of day." Darkly came the reply: "True; but it is a rash speculation, nevertheless. . . ."

Baudard lighted a cigar. "In Spain, Senor, in Spain. But we are in Paris here, my good sir, and we have a disgruntled Parliament, the members of which owe me enormous sums. True, it is not my money, but the money of the Order. But, *mon Dieu*, the good gentlemen do not know that! They would set up a tremendous hue and cry if dear St. James were flung into the Bastille. Mirabeau would write another essay on despotism. Beaumarchais could be bought, and then such a flood of scorching libels would be poured out, that Monsieur de Sartines would have no choice but to open the gates of the Bastille again. No, no! I would prefer to hear your opinion of Cagliostro."

The Spaniard passed his first finger thoughtfully over his aquiline nose. "His idea about Rome is, of course, all wrong. He had become obsessed by an *idée fixe* which he will soon give up of his own accord. He has built a castle in the air upon a shaky foundation." Baudard chuckled. "Rohan; yes, I know. Very shaky, I agree with you. I am inclined to think that Cagliostro is on the whole too much in favour of shaky things."

The Spaniard's head swayed dubiously. "Possibly! And yet I like him. The fact that in spite of his phenomenal in-

genuousness he should have got on so well, speaks in his favour. He is an adventurer of the stamp of our Conquistadores, who conquers the world through his cheek, his knowledge of men, and his invincible stupidity. And then there is his mysterious magnetic power, which enables him to subjugate people entirely—all very useful to us. He is, moreover, extraordinarily ambitious, and can only gratify his lust of power if he sticks to us. But why did he not come here yesterday evening, as he was instructed to do, instead of to-day?" Baudard laughed good-naturedly. "No need for alarm! He spent the night with a pretty woman." The Spaniard croaked angrily, "And what about discipline? What about obedience to the commands of the Order?"

The portly Frenchman snapped his fingers. "Pah! Those rules only apply to the others—not to us! But do not let us think any more about it. I have some extremely gratifying news for you. A scandal of unprecedented magnitude is quietly simmering, which will ruin the prestige of the French Crown for ever and a day."

Ximenez smiled contentedly. "I know. You are referring to your necklace. Monsieur de St. James." St. James gave a merry wink. "I congratulate you! You are well informed, 'pon my soul! As a matter of fact it is not my necklace; for it was made with masonic money. But do you realise what a magnificent scandal we now have within our reach? Do you understand that the Cardinal is only the victim of a trick. . . ."

The Spaniard rose solemnly. "A dangerous and fashionable little swindler, whom we may perhaps need, this Madame de la Motte, alleged to be of the blood of the Valois."

Baudard smiled and puffed at his cigar. "'Pon my soul, you seem to know everything. The de la Motte has her *pied-à-terre* at Versailles next to the *Belle Image* Inn." He gave a self-satisfied laugh. "*Belle Image* suits the fair schemer. . . . Well, and from that spot she is spinning her web in all directions. She is now corresponding with the Cardinal and making

him believe the letters come from the Queen. On the night of the 11th of August, last year, she arranged for him to meet in the Bosquet de Venus at Versailles a little courtesan, whom she dressed up to look like the Queen as Vigée-Lebrun painted her, and apparently it ended in a genuine love scene. Then writing letters in the Queen's name, she persuaded him to buy our necklace. This evening he handed it to her at Versailles. It doesn't matter to us that the Queen knows nothing about it, and is, in fact, not friendly to Rohan. The important point is that, in view of all that has happened, we can maintain the contrary. And when, on the 1st of August, the first instalment is not paid, as we assume it will not be, the scandal will be out." He flicked his cigar ash away. Ximenez peered with half-closed eyes into the darkness. "And what about the necklace?"

Baudard shrugged his shoulders. "Pah! it is worth the Lily of the Bourbons!" The Spaniard nodded pensively. "There is only one flaw in your calculations. Cagliostro is a friend of Rohan's. What if he should take the side of his friend? To have him as an enemy would considerably imperil our schemes."

With great emphasis Baudard replied: "Cagliostro is a man who prefers to go his way alone. He knows nothing of friendship. I don't mind wagering that he will betray Rohan. That's the first point. Secondly, the de la Motte is his mistress, as of course you are well aware, so that in any case he will have his finger in the pie in some way or other. Thirdly, we are not yet sure how much he actually knows. From the questions I put to him you doubtless inferred that I wanted to get clear about the matter. Possibly he may know nothing at all. No, Senor, I have no fear that he will put a spoke in our wheel."

The Spaniard's voice sounded dry. "So we have no alternative but to let him do as he likes. In any case he seems to be on the right scent. I only wish he were more prudent. There are so many devilries afoot in this matter. When things have gone far enough we must secure the de la Motte woman. She is a clever and dangerous creature."

Baudard emptied a glass of his magnificent white Bordeaux.

"I shall soon be able to discover how much he knows. In any case a little lesson will do Cagliostro no harm, and maybe we shall not need him any longer after the 1st of August. The welfare of the Order must stand above all personal considerations!" he exclaimed emphatically.

The Spaniard's eyes gleamed darkly. "The welfare of the Order, and our own. . . ." He stopped abruptly. "Do you imagine that I ever forget that?" The Frenchman sniggered as if he were amused, and then listened; for outside the bells of Notre Dame were booming the hour of midnight.

"So much the better, so much the better!" And the Spaniard rose.

The Master was angry. Fiercely his gaze bored into the delicate Chinese frescoes in the charming Salon des Singes. The conversation which he had had with Baudard de St. James, half an hour previously, had left him with a certain feeling of uneasiness, for the questions of the Treasurer of the Navy had been strange and had certainly not been asked for no purpose. Furthermore, he had a feeling that other ears besides Baudard's had been listening, possibly those of that mysterious Ximenez, for instance. And now that he had come to Rohan, whom he had expected to find at home, he was not there. Where in the world could he be?

Ever since he had wakened in the dainty bedroom of the de la Mottes, feeling at loggerheads with himself and the world, he had been somewhat puzzled. Had the little witch given him a sleeping-draught? The friendly little maid had come to the door and had informed him through the keyhole that Madame had gone to Mass, and he had availed himself of the opportunity to make a hasty search both of the bedroom and the boudoir. But apart from some mysterious notepaper, he had discovered nothing, and even this only aroused his suspicions, because it was different from her ordinary notepaper. A sheet of this had been his only booty.

Jeanne who had returned soon afterwards, chaffed him so

charmingly about his long sleep, and was altogether so sweet to him, that his suspicions with regard to the sleeping-draught had been lulled, although he had felt a strange buzzing in his head, which was very much more acute than he had ever known it to be after a heavy sleep. But perhaps this was only a result of his wild Sicilian sensuality, which for the first time in his life had encountered a partner worthy of it. He smiled. No, he had been given no sleeping-draught.

At that moment Rohan, who had not even waited to throw off his fur coat, dashed into the room to welcome his friend and Master. Cagliostro received him with frigid and regal dignity. "I seem to have been forgotten in Paris. People even keep me waiting!"

Deeply moved, Rohan replied, "Master! I have been waiting so impatiently for news from you! Why did you not let me hear from you? To-day I have had to go to Versailles on most important business."

"What is happening at Versailles?" Cagliostro, whose suspicions with regard to a certain sleeping-draught began to revive, frowned darkly. Had it after all been someone's object to keep him away from the Maison de Strasbourg? Thoughtfully the Cardinal replied: "Oh, it is an extraordinary business."

Cagliostro snarled, "And why could you not await my arrival before you allowed yourself to be drawn into this extraordinary business?" Rohan gazed intently into the Master's eyes. "Oh Master, how ardently I have longed for your arrival! Great events have taken place!" And as he spoke these words Rohan's face lit up with an expression of beautiful boyish delight.

Cagliostro, observing him closely, was not slow to put two and two together. Versailles . . . great events . . . his present expression . . . the Queen . . . and then Jeanne. . . . "So the Queen is now favourably disposed towards you?" he enquired carelessly, and sitting down he crossed his legs. Rohan grew pale. "What do you know about it?" And in great excitement

he went over to Cagliostro and embraced him. "Oh dear friend, I am so happy!"

Coldly the Sicilian held him at arm's length. "Tell me all about it!" The Cardinal blushed. "Not here! Come with me into my study." He rang the bell and told the lackey who hurried in to take half a dozen of the oldest Tokay and some biscuits into the study.

The magnificent panelling of the handsome prelate's comfortable little study, and the padding of the doors, made it impossible for anyone outside to hear anything that was said inside the room. Large, deep and well-upholstered armchairs seemed to invite confidential revelations; a log fire burned brightly in the grate, and the bookcases of fine rosewood which reached to the ceiling, lent the room a studious atmosphere which suggested contemplation.

They were silent for a while. Cagliostro gave his friend no help. It always amused him to see anyone trying to wriggle out of a difficult situation. So, helping himself to a glass of wine, he simply stared in front of him. A mouse was gnawing at the back of the panelling.

Rohan stood up, and going over to the large bureau with its carved lion-claw feet, opened a drawer and took from it a small dark red morocco case. Unlocking it he placed it before Cagliostro; a dried pale red rose lay inside it. The Sicilian gave a careless whistle, as if to himself. "Fancy that now! So we have even exchanged love tokens, have we?"

Rohan was bewildered. "Master! Not a love token; but just a small sign of royal favour." But Cagliostro interrupted him. "Rubbish! First of all let me see the Queen's letters!"

The Cardinal quickly returned towards the bureau, but stopped half way. "Well," cried Cagliostro emphasising as it were the order already given. The prince returned to his chair and in a faltering voice stammered, "I cannot show you the letters; my friend. I swear to you that they are not love-letters; but they are the letters of a woman." Cagliostro brought his fist down with an angry thud on to the upholstered arm of his

chair, and his deep-set eyes had a leaden expression. "Sentimental nonsense! Something is wrong here!"

Frowning slightly, Rohan replied, "Be reasonable Cagliostro! What could be wrong here? Do you suppose that I would deceive you?" A resolute wave of the Sicilian's hand brushed the retort aside. "I say that there is something wrong here. A love affair, *sapristi!* It is at least conceivable. Why should the Queen of France not be in love with a Cardinal? But you say that there is no question of a love affair. Then there must be something wrong. The Austrian woman is not likely to carry on a correspondence for nothing. And in connection with matters of State, Marie Antoinette has no need of Cardinal Rohan!"

Feeling somewhat insulted, the Cardinal rejoined: "But Master, Master! It is nothing new in the history of France for a Prince of the Church to be at the helm of the State. Remember Mazarin, Richelieu, Fleury. What if the Queen were really intending to compensate me for so many years of undeserved disgrace by entrusting me with the post of Prime Minister?"

For a moment or two Cagliostro could only pout, and then he burst into a fit of fierce and boisterous laughter. Rohan's brow flushed with vexation; but the Master appeared to pay no heed. He rolled, gurgled, roared and shook, and only calmed down when at last he got hold of the bottle of glowing gold Tokay. After he had wiped his mouth on his sleeve, he said: "Rohan, you are a child! You know that Marie Antoinette's partisans are your bitterest enemies—Baron Breteuil, your successor in Vienna, won the heart of Marie Thérèse, and is now a Minister and the confidant of the Queen. After Marie Antoinette has been opposing you for all these years, can she be expected all of a sudden, and without further ado, to support your candidature? No, you will never make me believe that!"

His face aflame, Rohan sprang to his feet. "But I have proofs!"

"Pooh!" said Cagliostro contemptuously. "Those letters! Paper is long-suffering!"

Almost stammering with excitement, the Cardinal continued: "Well then, I must tell you that I possess even more irrefutable proofs of the Queen's complete change towards me!"

Cagliostro blinked incredulously at him. "Really? Genuine proofs?"

"Yes." And Rohan brought his fist down heavily on the fine ebony table, making the bottles ring. "Have you ever heard of the Boehmer's necklace?"

Cagliostro looked intently at him. "What has that to do with it?" Triumphant Rohan replied: "The Queen has bought it without the King's knowledge, and has taken me into her confidence in the matter."

Cagliostro gave him a long mysterious look. "I understand. You purchased the necklace for the Queen." The Cardinal nodded proudly. "The contract was signed this afternoon, whereupon I went immediately to Versailles to leave the priceless jewel at the proper address. Well? Is that not sufficient proof of what her Majesty now feels for me?"

The Master gave a little cough. "Proof? Well, it might prove a hundred and one different things." The tone of his voice was as strange as the expression in his eyes.

A brief silence followed. His mind full of memories, Rohan was smiling to himself. All of a sudden Cagliostro spoke in strangely measured and penetrating tones: "And what is Madame de la Motte's part in all this?"

Taken wholly by surprise, the Cardinal met his companion's hard gaze. "She is simply the kind intermediary, nothing more."

With a jerk Cagliostro subsided into his armchair, and throwing his head back, folded his arms. "Oh, really?" he said, as if relieved. "Now I begin to understand." He dived a hand down into his breast pocket, as if he wanted to take out a piece of paper which was crackling inside it; but after all he left it where it was, and dropped his hand. Then, closing his eyes, he began to whistle a street ditty in shrill unmelodious tones. The bells of Notre Dame chimed the hour of twelve.

When the twelfth stroke had died away, Cagliostro rose. His voice was calm but imperious. "I must get independent confirmation of all this," he said, without looking at the Cardinal. "Don't say a word more about it to anyone."

"What do you intend to do?"

He thought a moment. "I shall ask the Queen whether she is wearing it."

Rohan went very white, put his hands before his eyes, and gasped for breath. With a grim smile Cagliostro followed every one of his movements. Then, extinguishing all the lights in the room, except one, he took a seat in a corner behind Rohan's back.

The cold steel of the sparkling little dress sword described the magic circle, arms were waved in the air, incomprehensible sounds thundered through the darkened room, the parquet floor creaked beneath fierce stamping, and in an unearthly high-pitched voice Cagliostro at last uttered the adjuration: "*Helion! Melion! Tetragrammaton!*"

Perspiring from every pore, and casting a cautious glance at Rohan, the Master at last leant silently back, folded his hands over his belly, and lapsed into deep thought.

So she did give me a sleeping-draught after all . . . She wanted me to come here only when it would be too late. . . . What were the Wasp's plans? . . . Go-between at Versailles? . . . The letters could of course be forged. . . . And the necklace? . . . She had stolen the necklace . . . one million six hundred thousand francs . . . *per bacco!* What a catch! . . . And she need not even fear that the theft will lead to any consequences. . . . That ass of a Cardinal had compromised himself terribly over the affair . . . One million six hundred thousand francs! *Santo porco!* And I was not in it! . . . But just wait a moment, I'll make you sit up! Giuseppe does not so easily allow himself to be overlooked.

He smiled angrily and his eyes flashed. He withdrew a sheet of ivory notepaper with a rich gold border from his breast pocket, and smelt it. His fierce look became fixed. It

seemed as if he had ceased breathing. His body stiffened as if he were going to spring into the night, and he grew pale with the effort he was making. The white patches on his face grew more livid every moment. His hands tightened their grip almost painfully on the round knobs on the ends of his armchair. His body was convulsed. And at last the magic shaft flew through the howling darkness and hit the centre of the target. With a gasp that sounded like a sob, Cagliostro collapsed. His huge mouth was all awry.

A bottle of Tokay had to pay the penalty. Then, standing up, he staggered unsteadily towards Rohan, who, springing to his feet, stared lifeless and helpless at the gruesome spectacle. "How terrible you look! What on earth has happened?"

Scornfully Cagliostro flung the sheet of ivory notepaper on the little ebony table. Rohan, with a shudder, clasped his hands to his face and yelled: "In the name of all the saints, help! The Queen's notepaper!"

Cagliostro took a deep breath. So here was the first piece of evidence! "A trifling feat of magic in Atlantis!" he ejaculated contemptuously.

Rohan's hands fell to his side. His blue eyes turned towards the Master in an ecstasy of admiration. "And what about the Queen, and the necklace?"

"It is in safe keeping."

"And what about me, me?" The Cardinal's voice was full of anguish. Cagliostro laid his fat hand on Rohan's moist brow and smiled unctuously. "You may hope!"

A one-horse chaise rattled along the Rue Neuve St. Gilles, and halted opposite the little portico of the Minims' monastery. A veiled woman accompanied by a slim man, dressed completely in black, got out, and entered the house. The carriage drove away.

In a flash they ascended the steps with the wrought iron balustrade, noiselessly opened the door, and while the woman lighted a candle, the man cautiously drew the curtains. Only

when this had been done, did she dare to throw off her fur coat. A small steel casket which until that moment had been concealed in the folds of her companion's cloak, suddenly made its appearance on the charming little inlaid rosewood table.

And now only did Jeanne look her friend Rétaux full in the face. Both were pale, although neither had yet fully grasped what had happened.

Jeanne soon recovered her mocking assurance. "Now it's done and cannot be undone. I am now the owner of one million six hundred thousand francs. Not much for a scion of the Valois, but a good start all the same!"

Her humour jarred upon her companion. "Now, no joking Jeanne! We have got to put our heads together and think." With icy coldness she asked: "What about?" His jaws convulsively chattering he quickly replied, "When and where we shall fly."

"Fly? But I shall stay here!"

Completely shattered and unnerved, the handsome young man dropped into a chair. His legs refused to bear him any longer. Icy shivers ran down his spine, and there was a buzzing in his ears. The whole world seemed to ring like a hollow globe. Standing in front of him, with her arms folded on her breast, Jeanne merely smiled. And then he was suddenly seized with impotent rage. "Have I served you faithfully only to end my life on the gallows? If it is discovered we shall be given no quarter. We have trafficked with the name of the Queen. And on the 1st of August at the very latest it will all have to come out."

She replied with the matter-of-fact precision of a machine: "It will never come out. One or other of the people concerned will certainly come to the conclusion that everything is not above board. But no one will dream of touching us. Rohan? I have only to lay one of the many effusions he has addressed to the Queen on Baron Breteuil's ministerial table, instead of throwing it into the fire, and Rohan goes to the Bastille. If his suspicions should be roused when the first instalment is not

paid, and he should attempt to approach the Queen, she will only turn him coldly away, as she has always done before, and he will continue to make sheep's eyes and to pay. No, no, no! I have thought it all out. I have not the slightest intention of flying! With these diamonds, the beggar-child will be able to recover her lost heritage in Bar sur Aube!"

Her words sounded calm, but her face was pale, and the lights and shades of a whole world of unloosed devils seemed to play about her form. She had no qualms, and yet, as she spoke she saw more and more clearly every moment what in fact she had done. Her calculations would be correct provided the factors which composed them remained unaltered. But what if a new factor were introduced? Cagliostro? Could she be at all sure of him? And could she be sure of little Nicole Leguay, who, quite unaware that she was impersonating the Queen, had bashfully lisped her greeting to the Cardinal that night in the Bosquet de Venus, and given him a rose? Well—as for the human factors, they did not matter much—they could always be managed—but any little accident, such for instance as a chance meeting between Rohan and the Queen, arranged by Princess Soubise—any unforeseen turn of the wheel of Fate, in short, any of those well-nigh silent and insignificant little changes of fortune—and she would certainly be in the Salpêtrière. Jeanne closed her eyes. The 1st of August suddenly loomed before her in menacing form. Rohan must pay . . . but he cannot . . . he writes to the Queen . . . he is taken into custody . . . detectives are sent out . . . and there is nobody who can say a word to help her. . . .

Jeanne's trembling fingers groped for support and suddenly touched the cold hard sides of the steel casket in which the diamonds lay.

Hold your head up, Jeanne; they will never dare to do it!

With a sudden resolve she tore the casket open, and the room seemed to grow brighter. Overcome by the sight, fair-haired Rétaux could not repress a cry. Suddenly his legs felt as if they could support him again. At the same moment

Jeanne closed the casket. "Wait a bit!" And she glided out of the room.

At bottom, jolly fair-headed Rétaux, who knew so many riotous songs, was no more of a coward than most men are, and yet he shuddered with fear when he thought of the gruesome road that had led to the diamonds with which Jeanne had just vanished into the adjoining room. For many years her confidant and her lover, he had in the end become her chattel, the mere plaything of her incalculable whims, an instrument for her breakneck schemes. He was possessed by Jeanne, and admired and feared her. What a brain she had! What grace! And what audacity! And yet how would it all end! Rétaux shuddered. He found himself unable to share Jeanne's confidence, and like a spectre there arose before him from the shadow of the night, the Bastille, convict's chains, the gallows. . . .

"Come here! Put out the light, and keep as quiet as you possibly can." The words came in a loud whisper through a crack in the door by which Jeanne had vanished. Rétaux blew out the candle, and groped his way to the streak of light which came through the aperture. In order to make sure of closing the door properly behind him, he went backwards into the boudoir. And then he turned round.

Jeanne's warning had been in vain. He uttered a cry. It was a cry of delight and of terror.

The countless candles in the lustre and the sconces made the room almost as bright as day; in fact it was so bright with all the reflections in the crystals and the bronze chains, that his eyes almost pained him.

In front of the cool silver of the mirror, which reached to the ceiling, Jeanne stood quite naked with her face towards him, wearing the Queen's necklace like a band of stars about her neck and breast. It was like a whirl of fire; it was as if the God of Lightning had come down in all his glory to a drunken world. The magic light of the stones played over the smooth

living skin of the graceful woman, like intangible fragments of the sun. They flashed blood red, dark green, blue and golden lights, they burnt with sizzling white heat, they awakened to fresh feats of brilliancy at each breath she took; then, as if falling asleep again, they sparkled afresh like the mysterious eyes of eternity. It was as if the stones had suddenly become alive, blazing flowers of the sweet and sinful garden of Hell. All the sufferings and vices, all the longings and supplications, which had surrounded these stones from time immemorial, rushed forth from their agelong repose into a new existence, and combined to create a supernatural radiance which fell sadly and menacingly like the cold and burning glance of Lucifer, on the deed which had just been consummated, and which could not now be recalled.

With her head thrown haughtily back, Jeanne stood there motionless. Her form looked more fragile than ever beneath the luminous weight of the jewel. Her skin was a soft shimmer. Her beautiful firm breasts rose and fell with her breath, and her supple waist sprang softly and voluptuously from the challenging breadth of her hips. Her slender almost boyish legs stood with inimitable grace, and as if overflowing with self-reliance and assurance on the thick dark-red carpet. And about her auburn hair lay those dark gold lights like a gorgeous saintly halo. A strange and haughty smile played about her mouth, which was as red as a deep wound, and her alluring blue eyes were deep and seductive.

Quite dazzled, Rétaux stumbled forward in the light. But at his first step Jeanne's face grew pale, her pupils contracted, and pressing a hand to her breast, she swayed as if she were about to fall. Rétaux caught her and laid her snugly on the couch. She murmured "A shaft . . . a shaft has pierced my heart!" Then throwing her arms round Rétaux, she whispered in broken tones and with tears welling in her eyes: "How ever did you get in here, Cagliostro?"

And her head fell back.

Silent and sad, Lorenza strode up and down her room, buried in dark thoughts. The gloomy room on the ground floor was as strange as the whole of the Marquise d'Orvilliers' mansion. How terribly alone she was! She had sent her maid to bed. Benito had gone out and Cagliostro had already acquired the habit in Bordeaux of staying at home only very rarely; for he usually spent the night either at one of the Egyptian Lodges he had founded, or wherever he was drawn by his latest adventure.

Lorenza was almost always at home, and almost always alone. She had learnt to know what tedium meant during her years in Bordeaux and Lyons, and had found leisure to reflect on the problems of the life about her, all of which was so alien to her being. Her tired and compassionate heart, which could not bear to look upon suffering, rebelled against a world, in which it felt ever more and more alone, and she longed for a region in which there would be nothing but love of one's neighbour and self-sacrifice, the example of which Jesus had once held up for men to follow. Led on by her proud and loving heart, and the promptings of her eternal solitude, her nature had grown ever more retiring and highly strung. Delivered up without guidance to the chaotic influences of an age full of doubt and change, she clutched at the ideas that grew luxuriantly from it, and which threatened to stifle her soul like the fair flower that it was.

In Saverne Rohan had called her his beloved dreamer but had had no time to enter into her thoughts. Abbé Georgel, however, had spent many an hour trying painstakingly to reconcile her to the deep and simple truths of the faith that passeth all understanding. But she had been denied the grace which might have made her see, and thus the two had parted strangers. Since then she had never met anyone in whom she felt she could confide.

For a long time now she and Giuseppe had had nothing in common. For years they had avoided anything in the way of a *tête-à-tête*, and now for the second time in their lives they

were living together in Paris. Lorenza remembered how, thirteen years ago, she had come to meet the handsome Duplessis in Boulogne-sur-Mer. Giuseppe had forced her to travel back to Paris in the rich steward's post-chaise, while he himself followed on horseback. In the close and intimate association a deeper understanding had gradually been reached between the two young people. Duplessis was a charming and delightful young man, perhaps a trifle too sugary, like all Frenchmen, but large-hearted and very much in love. On reaching Paris Giuseppe had actually encouraged the intimacy in order to extract ever larger sums from Duplessis' pocket, and at last, unable to look on at the game any longer, Lorenza had run away. Her splendid hiding-place was quickly discovered; but no sooner had Giuseppe tracked her down, than furious with her for having robbed him of such a comfortable means of livelihood, he allowed her to be imprisoned by the Paris police in St. Pélagie.

Whenever Lorenza thought of those weeks spent in prison, when her companions were chiefly women of the streets, she could not help frowning with anguish. Why had it not been her lot to become the wife of a good and upright man and lead a quiet and happy life? Instead of which she had had all the degradation of the first years and all the trickery and outrageous mumbo-jumbo of their recent existence. How often had she not implored Giuseppe to give up his life of adventure. A little cottage on the shores of the blue Mediterranean, somewhere in the south which was her home—would that not have been very much better? But every time she had ventured to put this request to him she had been laughed at as a silly little bourgeois fool. Growing ever more and more disgusted, she had turned away from him in profound and almost slavish terror, until perpetual solitude had become her lot. In Bordeaux her clever little spaniel Padrone, her only friend, had died, and after that, she had no one whom she could love, stroke and spoil.

All the painful memories of her life had recurred to her with

redoubled strength ever since, twenty-four hours previously, she had once more felt the breath of the great city upon her; and this had merely increased her bitter sense of disquiet. Why had she not run away from Giuseppe long ago? They were not suited to each other, and, moreover, she knew from his stars that he would come to a bad end. It is true he had the Sun in the sign of Gemini in the Tenth House, which pointed to great and rapid success. But the opposition of the Moon from the Fourth House accentuated by a quartile of Mars, denoted a violent fall, and from the ominous conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter and Mars in the House of Great Misfortune, Solitude, Enemies and Prisons, which extended in his horoscope over three signs of the Zodiac, there was no escape. How much persuasive eloquence had Lorenza not already poured forth in her efforts to save him? Had she not advised him to return to Rome and fling himself at the feet of the Holy Father? But although he professed a fanatical belief in astrology, he only laughed at her words. Return to Rome? Certainly; but not as a penitent sinner, but as Master of the World! Why, she insistently asked herself, had she not left Cagliostro long ago? Could it be possible that the bond the Church had forged was so strong that against her will it chained her indissolubly to a man whom she felt she loathed? Might she not seize the opportunity again and escape as she had done thirteen years ago from a cage which was now so golden? This time he would not dare to have her shut up in St. Pélagie. Her flight would do great harm to Cagliostro in the eyes of the world, and people would not fail to put an unfavourable interpretation upon it. But, after all, might it not be a good thing to injure him? The sooner the soap bubble was burst, the sooner would he come to reason and think of the salvation of his soul.

But had anyone a right consciously to lay rough hands upon the fate of another creature? Restlessly she paced to and fro. Was it possible to do it in any case? Did the ways and means and the decisions of life lie in the hand of man? Did not the newly-discovered planet Uranus, the star of sudden change and

upheaval, and of magic hermetic doctrines, burn in the infinite ether as some maintained? Lorenza knew that in its onward course this restless planet was drawing nearer to the earth; for in Cagliostro's natal horoscope Venus and Mercury were found in close conjunction. The transit of Uranus at this point was bound to lead to great upheavals in Giuseppe's life, and if this were really so, could her duty be anything else than to wait self-sacrificingly at the side of the man to whom she was bound?

In the terrible anguish of her meditations, Lorenza had often thought of flying to some obscure convent. But even this solution seemed to grow more difficult every year. Owing to the increasing fame of her husband, as well as to foolish gossip and scandalmongering, she had become a well-known personality, who was not only famous for her beauty but was also credited with being easy-going in matters of the heart. The Countess Cagliostro, the sweetheart of Prince Potjomkin—it was thus that she was everywhere known. Oh cruel irony of Fate! In the deep love that had come to them so late, and which had ended so abruptly 'ere it had really begun, there had been nothing but suffering.

Suddenly she stood still. Then almost mechanically she went to the candle burning in the corner. Slowly, as if she were struggling with herself, she drew forth a flat gold locket and opened it, and the portrait of a man lay before her in luminous colouring—black, wavy locks over a lofty brow, bold eyes and a proud mouth. “Giorgio!” she whispered with faltering breath, “Giorgio! . . .”

Her solitude was worse than pain. If only she did not have to be alone now! Any other time. . . . Oh, Oh! She shuddered when she thought of the anguish of the next few hours, of the torturing spectres of a useless existence. But whither should she go? She had only been in Paris a day, and the hour was late. It must be close on ten o'clock at night.

The kindly vision of a beautiful white-haired old lady appeared before her mind's eye. The news of Cagliostro's arrival

had already brought many distinguished visitors that very morning, among them his old benefactor, the Count de Vergennes, the former Prime Minister. The Countess had been good enough to call upon Lorenza, and had been received by her. The two had taken to each other immediately, and it was therefore not surprising that Countess Vergennes had decided to introduce Cagliostro's wife into Paris society, and had given her a pressing invitation to come that evening to a reception to be held in the Palais Vergennes.

And so for a brief space, she was not going to be alone. The beautiful white-haired Countess was so full of motherly solicitude. After one long last look she put away the locket and hurried to her dressing-room.

An hour later she was walking on the old lady's arm through the brilliantly-lighted salon. Astonished and attentive eyes were fastened upon her from all sides. Admiring comments were whispered about her and engulfed her as she advanced.

Suddenly her light step faltered and her breath failed beneath the glance of a certain eye. There, against that white column. . . . Was that not Giorgio? She went ghastly pale. The man in the black silk coat and the black jabot richly trimmed with pale yellow lace, approached her with a grand air of self-possession. His white wig added further distinction to his handsome and imposing features. . . . It was Giorgio! . . . Only he could have those bold eyes, only he could have that proud mouth. . . . In one great beat of her pulse the world was transformed.

"What is the matter, dear Countess?" asked the soft motherly voice of the older woman. Lorenza was silent and was still breathless and giddy when the distinguished courtier bowed before her. Countess Vergennes smiled. "Allow me to introduce you to my young friend, the Marquis de Launay, Governor of the Bastille."

At her usual hour Jeanne stepped out of the little portico of the monastery of the Minims. Every morning there was a

soft *prie-Dieu* ready for her there, upholstered in velvet on which she knelt and listened to the Mass which Father Loth read for the benefit of her soul and the strengthening of her faith. Father Loth, who at the same time acted in the capacity of *major domo* to the Countess, was glad to render her this service; for did he not know that she enjoyed the confidence of the Cardinal, one word from whose lips would suffice to bring one of the fattest French livings within his grasp? Jeanne, for her part, regarded regular attendance at church as one of the necessary attributes of Valois blood, and an outward and visible sign of virtue which all might see.

She had put on a little more rouge than usual to-day, but was dressed in black as was her wont when she went to Mass. She showed no sign of having spent a sleepless night, except possibly an uncontrollable tendency to yawn a little too often. She ran up the steps of her house and burst into her boudoir without noticing the warning signs made by her maid. But she started back as soon as she saw the horrible and unexpected sight that met her eyes. The drawer which concealed the hopes, the wishes and the dreams of her life to the tune of one million six hundred thousand francs stood wide open! And the necklace had gone! Her heart stopped; she thought she was going to die. Was this Rétaux's doing?

From the next room came the sound of a man's voice, and Jeanne immediately felt relieved. A visitor had arrived, Rétaux had been surprised and had stuffed the necklace into his pocket. She hurried to the little salon, but here also there was no Rétaux to be seen, and on the couch sat a man the sight of whom caused her the utmost uneasiness.

It was Cagliostro. He did not get up when he heard her footstep, but glanced up at her with a look of mingled friendliness and mockery; and, in the measured tones of one who knew, he enquired: "Come back from Mass?"

Forcing herself to smile, she went up to him. "You monster! How long have men remained seated when a lady enters the room?" She held out a hand to him. He gave it a long

kiss and sniffed it for some time before he let it go. "What a sweet scent it has!—a little like incense, a little like February frosts, and very much like a sinful night!"

She passed her fingers through his hair. "I was very good last night. You were not here."

He threw his fierce head back with a jerk and stared steadily at her. She went pale and stepped back involuntarily. And then was put the vile question: "What has happened to the diamond necklace?"

For a moment she looked thoughtfully in front of her. Then she shrugged her shoulders indifferently. "So you were at Rohan's yesterday. How should I know what has happened to the diamond necklace? Ask the Queen!" He laughed a hollow laugh, and looked darkly at her. "One million six hundred thousand francs! I would give something to know where it is to be found at this moment."

"Why?" she replied coolly. "Do you want to steal it?"

His face was distorted by an almost demoniacal grin, and doubling up, he swayed to and fro in an ecstasy of silent laughter. The spectacle evidently did not please her. Moreover she was almost at her wits' end with anxiety to know where Rétaux had gone with the necklace. She must do something; so she begged Cagliostro to excuse her for a few minutes while she took off her hat and coat, and thereupon hurried out.

In the boudoir she was again confronted by the pitiless emptiness of the open drawer. She ran into the bedroom. Here too no Rétaux was to be seen. She rang the bell. Rosalie appeared. "Does Madame want anything?"

"Where on earth is Rétaux?" The Wasp was hoarse with excitement. But the little chamber cat curtsied charmingly. "Monsieur de Villette went away ten minutes before the Count arrived. Monsieur de Villette seemed in a very good humour."

As pale as a sheet, Jeanne supported herself on the arm of a chair. So he had stolen it and had left the house with his booty, and she could not even put the police on his track! Rosalie looked at her mistress's drawn features in astonish-

ment. "What is the matter with Madame?" With a terrible look, Jeanne turned to face her. "Go!"

Jeanne was now seized with a fit of frenzy such as she had never before in her life experienced, an outburst of elemental passion. She smashed her chair to splinters. She tore the blankets and sheets from the bed, gave vent to fierce curses and terrible half-stifled cries, tore her beautiful hair and seethed, raved, and roared like a volcano throwing up lava and flame. Her eyes blind with tears, she writhed in a paroxysm of foaming ferocity. Suddenly a heavy hand was laid on her shoulder. Like a wild beast, she swung round gnashing her teeth.

"What ever is the matter with my little dove?" asked Cagliostro, contemplating her with an expression of mingled curiosity and satisfaction. "Has somebody taken her precious necklace from her after all?" Her livid face went grey with terror. What did he know? She could not endure his glance a moment longer. With bowed head she ran away from him and finally collapsed helplessly on the couch in the salon. It was a half-acted half-genuine picture of utter despair. Cagliostro looked at her full of admiration. Whatever she did, she did well. He longed to see the fascinating witch standing in a court of law for once. Then he sat down beside her, fat, plump and comfortable, pulled her hands from her face and with great pride and philosophic composure observed, "Don't cry any more, my dove. The necklace is in my pocket!"

In a flash her hard little fingers were clutching round his neck. "Thief!" she panted breathlessly. He had some difficulty in freeing himself from her, and was obliged to laugh, although he was struggling convulsively for air. Abysmal hate stared at him through her wide-open eyes. Laughing loudly, and holding her off with one arm, he drew the necklace from his pocket. She pounced upon it with a wild hysterical cry.

Brutally he pulled it away from her. "Sit down, you giddy goose, or else I will show you what one does with babies like you in Palermo. Sit down, or I'll thrash your backside accord-

ing to all the rules of the art!" He weighed the dazzling jewel carelessly in his hand. The capture of this piece of evidence had been thoroughly successful. He now held Jeanne no less securely than he did the necklace.

But with open defiance and a fine affectation of haughtiness, she kept her eyes riveted upon him—for in her breast a struggling crowd of disquieting questions was surging. What does he know? What will he do? What does he want?

His unctuous glance glided from the diamonds to Jeanne. "I wonder whether you would be so kind as to give me a small bottle of your splendid sleeping-draught, my little Countess?"

She shuddered, and yet nothing could have equalled the radiant cordiality with which she gazed at him. "Master, yes, now I know that you are a seer." So saying, she caught hold of his hand. It was as if she had devoted years of study to Elisa of Mitau, with the shadow of the great Coft upon her. Cagliostro nodded affably. "Now you see for yourself that it is impossible to keep anything secret from me." His expression became regal, possibly a trifle too regal. Proudly, possibly a trifle too proudly, he roared, "Confess that you played a little comedy in order to be able to put one million six hundred thousand francs about your bewitching neck twenty-four hours before the Queen does so for ever."

Jeanne's tortured heart gave a deep and silent groan of relief. The Sicilian suspected nothing! Like a flower, she folded her hands in the attitude of a child at prayer.

But with a cross expression on his face he put the necklace back carelessly into his trouser pocket, and cast her a sidelong glance of mingled mystery and amusement. "Now shall we discuss business, Countess?" he asked. But hardly had he pronounced this pregnant question, which once more aroused Jeanne's uneasiness, than her maid burst bewildered into the room, exclaiming, "Madame, Oh Madame, the Cardinal!"

Jeanne sprang to her feet. The game was up! This was evidently the trap-door falling upon her. . . .

Cagliostro rose grinning, and stood with his back to the

window, so that he might thoroughly enjoy the situation. In his ceremonial purple the Prince Cardinal entered. His gait was more rapid than usual, his eyes were full of uneasiness. Bowing courteously, he cast an astonished glance at Cagliostro. "A very good morning to you, Madam." His tone was strange and he seemed hurried and nervous. "I have just come from Versailles. She has not worn it."

"Have I not told you over and over again how much I regret ever having had anything to do with the business?" Jeanne's heart was beating wildly, but she did not lose her composure for one moment, and in stifled and apparently angry tones she added, "I can see that it will bring me nothing but trouble." Whereupon she cast her eyes to the ceiling with all the royal dignity of an offended Valois. "Ask the Master! I was this moment discussing the matter with him."

The Cardinal turned in astonishment to Cagliostro. "You were discussing the necklace?" The Master thrust his hand into his bulging pocket which seemed to be full of jingling coins, and cast an amused glance at Jeanne. "Yes, the poor child is very much worried about the necklace. She was quite desperate when I arrived here, weren't you, Jeanne?"

She gave a disconsolate nod. Rohan's eyes turned from one to the other. Was Cagliostro Jeanne's lover? He would have been glad to know that he was, but his anxiety over the fact that the Queen had not worn the necklace at the Court Ball on the previous night, overshadowed everything else. "I beg you to excuse my anxiety, Madam, but, as a matter of fact, I cannot understand why she did not put it on. Give me some explanation to set my mind at rest."

He spoke like a lover who has presented a little ballet girl with a beautiful jewel and is perturbed because she will not wear it. Jeanne was full of wounded feminine dignity. "Am I responsible for the whims of the Queen? Ask her yourself!" The Cardinal raised his fat little hand to silence her. "I dare not do that. You know very well that Her Majesty has again

and again begged me in her letters to be as reserved as possible until she herself appoints the day."

At the mention of the letters Cagliostro stared at Jeanne with a strange expression in his eyes. She felt it, but merely shrugged her shoulders, and pouted defiantly. Still apparently jingling the coins in his trouser pocket the Sicilian now joined in the conversation. His voice rang rusty as a creaking weather-cock, so full was he of fierce cheerfulness. He seemed to underline every word he spoke with his fat finger in the air. "It is all as plain as a pike-staff. The Queen does not dare to appear before the King yet with the necklace on." The Cardinal's expression became desperate. "But she must do so sooner or later. . . ." He stopped, overcome by his desperate anxiety.

Cagliostro's first finger now rose vertically aloft and his voice droned comfortingly. "Not a day before the payment is completed."

Jeanne cast a furtive glance at him. She was sensitive enough to guess that he had something up his sleeve. For a moment she was seized with a desire to bring about the downfall of the Sicilian. Could she not throw herself at the Cardinal's feet and accuse Cagliostro of the theft? Could she not tell him that what he was jingling so brazenly in his trouser pocket was the necklace, and that he had stolen it? But how had the necklace got into Cagliostro's pocket? Had she not only yesterday, in her rooms at Versailles, in the presence of the Cardinal himself, handed over the jewel to the supposed messenger of the Queen, whom she had introduced as Chamberlain Desclaux? No, she must hold her tongue and wait.

Rohan bowed his head disconsolately. "Another two and a half years! Well, I suppose I must be patient. But you are quite right, Master. What am I saying, though? You are never anything else but right. Since the miracle of the notepaper yesterday I have sworn never again to allow a word of doubt to rise in my mind. Only think, Madam, what this divine magician succeeded in doing yesterday!" Rohan had recovered his good cheer, and now turned to Jeanne, who was sud-

denly all ears. "He wished to see the Queen's letters, but unfortunately I was obliged to deny him the pleasure. Whereupon, what did he do but produce from his pocket a piece of the self-same notepaper as Her Majesty used for the contract."

Stars whirled, shot and spun before Jeanne's eyes. So the Sicilian knew everything! She was choked by hate and fear. Summoning her last remnants of self-possession, she succeeded in dropping on to the corner of a chair, and hastily crossed herself. Cagliostro laughed aloud and smacked the Cardinal on the shoulder. "You never know what a woman will do. Perhaps she will wear it after the 1st of August after all." Rohan embraced him. "You give me fresh courage, Master. And now I must be off. *Au revoir*, Madam." He gave a friendly bow and left. Cagliostro accompanied him.

Silence reigned for a few moments. Jeanne sat very still, absent-mindedly playing with her lace. Would he come back?

He did come back. He saw her sitting there, pale as death and he was obliged to laugh. He laughed loud and heartily, a resounding brutal and frank laugh that made the walls shake. It was all so extremely funny; he turned it over quietly in his mind and was much amused. What if I were to stick to the necklace and simply go off with it? Who would be able to prove anything against me? As the Wasp deceived the Cardinal yesterday and pretended to give the necklace to an alleged Chamberlain of the Queen, there is not a judge who would not take for granted that she had stolen it. It is true that by so doing I would make an enemy of her. So it is better for me to pretend that I know nothing at all about it and give it back to her. As I have her in my hand, I also have a hold on the necklace, or whatever she wishes to achieve with it.

Assuming a confidential air he gave Jeanne a friendly wink. "I bamboozled him all right, didn't I? By the bye, it was very careless of the Queen to leave her notepaper lying about everywhere. So like Marie Antoinette!" Bright red patches stood out on Jeanne's cheeks. Saved! He knows nothing! Like the good actress she was, she knew how to turn even her

flushes to account, and pretended to be proudly indignant. "Not careless in the least, for she knows she can trust me. As for the Cardinal, we are now quits."

Cagliostro's dark and bloated countenance became serious, and taking the necklace from his trouser pocket he looked deep into Jeanne's eyes. "Do you want to have it back?"

"What must I do to get it back?"

"When are you taking it to Versailles?"

She could not rid herself of a feeling of paralysing uncertainty. What was he going to do? Would he have her watched or followed? Ridiculous! She scented traps everywhere to-day! With an insolent glance she threw back her head. "I am still waiting for a letter."

Cagliostro threw the necklace carelessly into her lap. "There you are! Be very careful of it! Such jokes are dangerous. Many a man has been sent to the Bastille for less serious matters than that." He fondled her cheek. "What a sly little monkey you are, Jeanne!"

"Monsieur de Sartines will see you." The black-clad servant opened the door which led to the almighty lieutenant of police, whose sharp ears, so it was declared, no suspicious sound within the frontiers of France ever escaped. In spite of the sunny February morning the room was cold and gloomy. A gaunt elderly man, with an enormous white wig, who had been sitting at a table covered with papers, stood up and stepped towards his visitor. His eyes were stern and his lips thin. A scrupulous correctness was manifest in all his movements, and as he bowed, he smiled. "Do I see Count Cagliostro before me?"

"You do, Count d'Alby de Sartines!" came the arrogant reply.

Involuntarily the police lieutenant took stock of the fat little man, and a shade of interest entered his cold features. "Count de Vergennes had occasion to speak to me about you the other day. He informed me that you wished to talk to

me on a matter of political importance. Take a seat, Count. How can I be of use to you?" With a dry wave of his hand Sartines pointed to one or two chairs which, together with the large writing table and the forbidding-looking record case, constituted the only furniture of the gloomy businesslike office of the chief of the French police. The two took their seats in silence. By no movement of his face did Sartines betray the impression Cagliostro had made upon him. With a snort of satisfaction the Sicilian crossed his legs and taking a case from his pocket, he opened it and asked the officer's permission to smoke a cigar. "From the Spanish colonies," he added complacently, and handed the case to Sartines. The latter declined, somewhat annoyed, and with his hard eyes watched the elaborate procedure by which Cagliostro cut the tip of his cigar, sparked a tinder into flame, and finally lit the cigar at the glowing end of it. Aromatic blue smoke was wafted through the cool room.

"What do you think of the spectre of revolution, sir?" Cagliostro enquired at last, dreamily contemplating the rings of smoke. Sartines stared in front of him with an expression of boredom. "Do you mean the revolution as described in the works of modern writers, or the rumours about dissatisfaction among the people?"

The Sicilian laughed good-naturedly. "I was told that you were a cautious man, sir, and my informants certainly did not exaggerate." He looked about him with some curiosity. "And so this is what the Chamber of Horrors of the Police looks like! I imagined it would be more romantic. Your surroundings, sir, seem somewhat too stiff and formal to my southern eyes. Is it true that you are a Freemason, Monsieur de Sartines?"

The only answer he received was a silent shake of the head. Cagliostro, however, did not allow himself to be frightened, but proceeded to ask calmly, "And what is your opinion of Freemasonry?"

Sartines cast a piercing glance at him. "It is an Order which

has very considerable means at its disposal, and pursues humane objects which we gladly support," he remarked drily. "But you know this better than I do, for, as we are well aware, you yourself are a Freemason."

A police officer hurriedly entered the room, and saluting, approached his chief and whispered something in his ear. Sartines drew himself up. "In ten minutes," he said curtly. The subordinate bowed and vanished. The lieutenant turned to his companion. "I should be delighted, Count Cagliostro, to have an opportunity of discussing all these questions with you, but I must now beg you to confine yourself to the matter hinted at by Vergennes, as duty calls me."

Cagliostro nodded condescendingly. "I should like to enter the public service, sir. . . ."

"I am afraid you are appealing to the wrong man, Count. You should apply to Baron Breteuil."

Cagliostro looked pityingly at him. "They told me you were a cautious man, sir. No, no, I am sorry to be obliged to contradict you, but this is the right quarter for me to approach. I have accidentally become acquainted with the various ramifications of an extremely dangerous and far-reaching revolutionary plot. I should be glad if you would kindly find out at the proper quarter what post I might be given if I communicate my knowledge to you and at the same time advise you as to the precautionary measures which should be taken. I have no more to say to-day, as I am being watched by the conspirators. Our interview must remain absolutely secret. I will write to you if I wish to see you again."

His hard, pitiless and compelling eyes had been resting as heavy as lead on the Chief of Police while he uttered these words, and a strange feeling of paralysis had come over Sartines. He rose to his feet almost mechanically, as Cagliostro stood up, and could not help feeling surprised at his own words. "I shall carry out your wishes, Count." Whereupon he breathed more freely and felt that the piercing gaze of those infernal black eyes was slackening. Cagliostro smiled. "And now I must

leave you to your work, sir. By the bye, what is the trouble now?"

To his unbounded astonishment, Sartines heard himself reply: "Oh, it is only a poor devil who appears to have stolen some diamonds."

As Cagliostro strode through the ante-room which was crowded with police officers, his face beamed with goodwill and fatherly affection. Tips flew right and left. "The first iron in the fire," he said with a smile, as he stepped out of the gloomy portals.

Sartines returned to his writing table. His visitor had exhausted him somewhat. What was there about the funny little man that overcame his own resistance so forcibly and inevitably. Like an automaton he went to the record case and took out an iron box on which a large white C was painted. It took him some time to open all the locks on it and to look for the right paper. Failing to find what he wanted, he put it aside and took out another box close by with B painted upon it; but before he was able to open it, two police officers brought in a pale, fair, well-built man, who looked very much frightened. Sartines did not even vouchsafe him a glance but continued to busy himself with the strongbox.

One of the officers came forward and said: "This is Rétaux de Villette, who has been taken into custody on suspicion of having stolen some diamonds."

Sartines raised his cold glassy eyes. "Where is Monsieur de Brugnières?" The police officer reeled off his report. "The police inspector of the Montmartre quarter was obliged to go to the Granaries on special business." A flash of recollection entered Sartines' eyes, and he made a sign to show that he understood. "Report what you have to say."

"In accordance with our instructions we went this morning, under Monsieur de Brugnières' guidance, to the Rue St. Louis aux Marais, where on the fifth floor we found the prisoner's attic. After we had knocked and received no reply we proceeded, according to orders, to break open the door, but found

it unnecessary as there was no bolt on it. After we had gone through the first room, which was empty, we found the prisoner on his bed in his bedroom in the company of a street woman known to the police, called Berthe la Vache. After questioning her we let her go, as being unconnected with the crime. The prisoner, who made no attempt to escape, did not seem to be quite sober. To judge by the number of bottles lying on the floor he had spent the night drinking heavily. As he was lying naked on the bed we did not make any personal search of him, but on inspecting his clothes we found in the pockets of a coat which had been flung on a stool, forty-three small diamonds, which were immediately counted in his presence, registered and sealed." And the police officer laid a sealed packet in front of Sartines, which the latter leisurely opened. With a magnifying glass he carefully examined the beautiful stones. "Apart from this you found nothing?"

"But for some linen and one or two articles of clothing, we found nothing, sir."

"Any writing, any correspondence?"

"Only a letter." So saying, the officer laid an untidy smudged piece of writing paper on the table. Sartines cast a swift glance at it, and then looked in astonishment at the prisoner. Rétaux dropped his eyes.

"Do you admit the facts, prisoner?" Sartines enquired, in cold threatening tones. Rétaux, poor, pleasure-loving Rétaux, made several attempts to speak before he succeeded in stammering out his reply: "I am innocent!"

Sartines gave a faint smile. "The usual false claim of every criminal. For a week you have been going the round of all the small jewellers, offering them your diamonds for sale. They are beautiful stones, though they are certainly damaged, as if they had been forcibly prised out of their mountings with a knife. You have always asked ridiculously low prices for these precious stones, and have shown by your manner that you were ill at ease. In fact, your behaviour has aroused suspicion. The

facts point to theft. The only thing that can help you is a frank confession. Where did you get these stones?"

Rétaux shook like a leaf. "I am selling them on behalf of a distinguished lady, whose name I cannot divulge." Sartines laughed ironically. "Ha! ha! The notorious distinguished lady! We shall keep you on bread and water, sir, until you are willing to give us the name of the lady."

"She is a relative of the Royal Family," said Rétaux in tones of supplication.

Sartines nodded with benevolent unconcern. "Oh, we also know all about the relatives of the Royal Family!" He wrote something on a slip of paper, rang the bell and a black-clad servant immediately entered. "Take this to the officer in charge of thefts."

He then leant comfortably back and kept his eyes fixed on Rétaux's bent form. Rétaux's head was buzzing damnably, both with agitation and the effects of debauch. Oh that Jeanne! Why had she entrusted precisely him with the sale of the little stones? This was a very different matter from singing songs and writing charming letters. And why too on Ash Wednesday of all days? One should never enter upon such transactions on Ash Wednesday! With a shudder he acknowledged to himself that she stopped at nothing. A few days before she had sent him on his wild goose chase she had given a dinner in honour of her husband's return, and had actually invited Messrs. Boehmer and Bassenge to the meal—and all unsuspecting, the two jewellers had sat at table enjoying soup, fish, game and sweets in the very room where in a securely locked drawer the stones of the necklace, which had been violently pulled to pieces, had been placed together for the last time before starting upon their endless journey from hand to hand through the centuries. Yes, Jeanne was capable of anything. But he, poor pleasure-loving Rétaux, had been taken into custody only six days afterwards. The grim spectre of the Bastille loomed before his eyes.

The door opened. A piece of paper was laid before the

police lieutenant, which he read with a frown. Whereupon he turned once more to the prisoner. "Will you tell me the name now, or shall I have you removed?"

As white as a sheet, Rétaux cried, "Mercy! It is the Countess de la Motte Valois!"

Full of paternal solicitude, the stern police lieutenant crossed his legs. "Fancy now, the little de la Motte! Bring me file M," he said to one of the officers.

Jeanne was known to the police, who were aware that she transacted small business deals for profit. The authorities could not object to this; but they kept a watch on such people. Thanks to mercenary activities of the kind in society, a continual purification of the blood of the upper classes took place; for it was imperative that these suspicious foreign bodies should be eliminated from society's circulation in accordance with definite rhythmic laws. But as the officer in charge of thefts declared that no loss of diamonds had been reported, and as Rétaux, who was gradually becoming more composed, swore that the stones belonged to a jewel which an impecunious but blue-blooded lady named Jeanne was trying to sell, there was nothing against either him or the person for whom he was working.

After a report had been drawn up, Rétaux received the diamonds back and was allowed to go. But before he reached the door Sartines called after him, "One minute, sir. What is the meaning of this letter which they found at your place?"

Rétaux almost stumbled as he turned round. He was on the point of confessing everything, so menacing did the question sound in his ears.

"How could you get hold of a letter from Count Cagliostro to Cardinal Rohan?"

"The Countess de la Motte Valois," he stammered . . .

Sartines helped him out of his difficulty with a superior smile. "I understand. An extremely versatile lady! You may go."

The police lieutenant smiled as he left and rang twice. A

police officer entered. "Keep your eye on Rétaux! I wager my life that sooner or later we shall become better acquainted with him."

A few hours later Cagliostro was striding through the apartments of the palace on the Place Vendôme, and the mirrors on the walls reflected the image of a short determined man in the act of putting his second iron in the fire.

He was taken to the same study which he had learnt to know on the occasion of his first visit. His host rose courteously to greet him. When they were both seated the Sicilian cast a cheerful sidelong glance over the warm wooden panelling of the room, as if he were looking for something familiar along it.

Baudard followed his glance for a little while and then remarked drily, "How is my friend Monsieur de Sartines?" His eyes rested calmly on Cagliostro's loud bottle green jabot with its round brass buttons.

The Sicilian retaliated on him unmercifully for this question, though he gave a loud good-natured laugh as he replied, "Why do you always try to keep that Spaniard out of my sight? What was his name, by the bye? Yes, just imagine, I called on Sartines. I wanted to find out what they thought of Egyptian Freemasonry at Versailles. You know, of course, that I founded a Mother Lodge at Lyons, and, since I left, my disciples there have succeeded in carrying out one of the most difficult magic operations possible. They were so puffed up with pride that they reported the matter to Paris, and now I am literally overwhelmed with requests to found a Lodge here. What am I to do? One must have something to keep one busy."

Baudard's fat rosy face clouded under the influence of thoughts which were evidently unpleasant. "I don't understand you, Count Cagliostro. Why, after you have received such a hearty welcome from us, do you keep harping on your particular schism? Your Egyptian Freemasonry is neither fish nor fowl. Can you, who are a revolutionary with gifts of the

highest order, be satisfied with this childish game of mysticism and magic? I should have thought your ambition would urge you into wider fields. Well, what did Sartines say?"

Cagliostro's glance glided once more over the panelling. "The Spaniard," he said with a smile, "why do you always keep the Spaniard from me? Sartines? He is certainly a fool, but I intend going to see him again. Should I not make a most excellent lieutenant of police for France? Oh, Monsieur Baudard, what do you know of my ambition? I admit that the Spaniard has also spoken about it. Perhaps my ambition is more modest than you suppose. Nine years of work with the Freemasons have rather worn me out, and I shall now confine my energies to my own work, Egyptian Freemasonry, and establish it in Paris and perhaps in Rome as well, and then I shall retire to a little cottage on the shores of the Mediterranean and cultivate wine and live a family life—for you know that I am married."

Baudard shook his head. "I still do not understand. People had given me quite a different impression of you, Count Cagliostro."

The Sicilian nodded affably towards the oak panelling. "Oh, yes, the Spaniard."

Baudard could not help smiling. "Well, yes, the Spaniard. He was here a few months ago. It was then decided that if you would give up your Egyptian Freemasonry as an Independent Order, you should be offered the primacy of all the Orders of Freemasons. It might mean that you would lose some thousands of lucrative disciples. But you would become the Great Orient of the world. Does that not tempt you?"

Cagliostro merely shook his head and thrusting out his chin, rolled his eyes. "Primate? Then you would have to consent once and for all to any modification and instruction I might think fit to recommend."

The eyes of the jovial Treasurer of the Navy dimmed a little and lifting up his round rosy face, he asked in hesitating tones, "What would these modifications and instructions consist of?" Cagliostro's reply sounded snappy. "In the first

place, you would have to burn all your archives, which are nothing more than a cesspool of foolishness!"

Baudard looked very grave. "But to burn all our archives would mean nothing more nor less than to deny our glorious past and sail out into an uncertain future without a rudder!" The Sicilian took a pinch of snuff, gave an exaggerated loud sneeze, and then looked menacingly at his companion. "What you have done up to the present is only worthy of attention from the financial point of view—you have drawn a certain amount of money from the pockets of your members. But do you imagine you control the whole of the incomes of all Freemasons or even their souls? Not a bit of it! And you could never do so, for where are your uplifting thoughts, your inspiring ideas? You have neither thoughts nor ideas! Your scheme of revolution is paltry. What will happen when with shouts and cries, you have overthrown your Kings and your aristocracies? You will merely have transferred the power and put it into other hands. And when once you have put it in the hands of the masses, they will only cold-bloodedly ring your necks—you who have helped them to attain their power. Only if you have the entire control of the souls and purses of your disciples can you achieve your end—unlimited power over the whole world. So away with your rubbish!"

He had talked himself into a sweat. The Grand Master of the French Lodges answered him coldly. "And do you pretend to have at your disposal the uplifting ideas you mention, Count Cagliostro? And if you have, where are they? How can you convince us beyond doubt that you and your ideas are of greater worth than our structure which has lasted thousands of years?" As he spoke he contemplated with a superior smile his long pointed nails which presented a curious contrast to his plump well-kept hand.

Deeply discomfited Cagliostro took stock of him. He had little in common with this man Baudard. The Treasurer of the Navy was too well groomed for his taste, unsavourily well groomed. He rose abruptly. "You want proofs, Monsieur de

St. James. You shall have them! In a few months your Lodges, resting on their mouldering structure of documents of which you are so proud will be empty. I shall take your Freemasons away from you. Do you hear me? You may use every possible means to prevent me from fulfilling my threat. I declare open war upon you. Do you understand? I, Cagliostro, against the whole of your organization! And I tell you in advance that in a few months you will capitulate." He stood up and in a trice had recovered his usual fierce and cheerful expression. "Well, we've had a heart to heart talk for once. Oh, and please greet the Spaniard for me."

The door closed with a crash.

Baudard shrugged his shoulders. With a slight frown he too now looked towards the panelling. The hidden door immediately opened and Ximenez stepped in. For a few minutes complete silence reigned. Hiding behind the blinds, the Spaniard gloomily watched the departing figure through the window. Then turning sharply to the Treasurer of the Navy, who was leaning against his desk, he said, "He is going to set to work with the skirts."

Baudard looked at him in confusion. "I don't understand. What can he possibly gain by so doing?"

"Everything!" And Ximenez stepped slowly up to him. "Women have long been jealous and mad with rage because they are not admitted to our Lodges. If he wins their support he will immediately get the men into his pockets as well. He can do that, but we cannot. Our statutes and regulations forbid it. And even if we wished to overthrow them, it would take a long time, and meanwhile he would have won the game. He is right, Baudard; we shall have to capitulate, if he. . . ." Ximenez stopped thoughtfully.

But Baudard, who was now smiling, observed gently, "You mean if he does not himself come to grief through the skirts?"

The olive-skinned Spaniard nodded and replied in dry businesslike tones: "We might even help him a little in that direction. I shall set to work as soon as I can with the little de la

Motte." He stroked his aquiline nose with his finger and frowned. "My only fear is that he is a little bit too cunning for that."

A deep sigh from Baudard admitted the truth of this remark.

Only the most intimate friends had been invited. Great heavy curtains hung in front of the windows of the vast reception room in the Maison de Strasbourg producing a sort of brown twilight and preventing the mild March sunshine of the early afternoon from entering. On the oval mahogany table in front of the fireplace thick yellow candles were burning in heavy silver candelabra, the flickering light from which was reflected in the glistening water of a large round crystal bowl.

Clad in the priestly purple of Passion Week, the Cardinal sat with his usual worldly suavity in an easy chair and chatted with Lorenza and the Countess Vergennes, who had arrived together. "Do you not know what your husband proposes to do?" he asked, turning to the Roman girl. "I am dying of curiosity to know what this secret magic seance means."

"I am sorry I cannot help you, Monseigneur; my husband does not initiate me into these mysteries," Lorenza replied with a calm smile. The Cardinal nodded amused. "Oh yes, quite right. I know! He is a stickler for propriety in these matters, and holds by the old maxim, *mulieres in ecclesiis taceant*." And in the best of spirits he gazed at the beautiful fair woman. "You seem to have more colour than usual, madonna. Is it the spring, or is it Paris that suits you so well?" She blushed. With childish curiosity, he continued. "And what are you wearing there—that beautiful little locket on your breast? May I look at it?"

To have declined such a request from His Eminence would have been a gross breach of etiquette. Flushing violently, Lorenza granted the wish and handed him the locket. The prince opened it and with an expression of surprise examined the miniature painted in luminous colours on ivory. Then he cast an enquiring look at Lorenza. She was so embarrassed

that she did not know what to do and stammered the first words that came to her lips. "My son. . . ." But immediately felt so ashamed that her eyes filled with tears.

Neither Rohan nor Countess Vergennes thought her reply at all singular; for since Cagliostro had been one of the friends of Christ, why should not his thirty-year old Roman wife have a son of forty? It was all a matter of rejuvenation, and if there were tears in her eyes—well, perhaps the marshal-looking man in the portrait had fallen in one of the many battles that had been fought in recent years. With deep respect, Rohan returned the locket. "Don't you think, Madam, that Madonna Lorenza's son bears an extraordinary resemblance to one of our dearest friends?"

The Cardinal's question sounded harmless, but the smiling reply of the white-haired lady was not so harmless. "Yes, I agree; you mean our dear Marquis de Launay? You must surely remember him, my child. You have already met him often at my house, and always seemed to get on very well with him." The glance which the old Countess vouchsafed the Cardinal, as she spoke, was certainly eloquent. Rohan gave her a covert glance of understanding. With a hot flush on her cheeks Lorenza restored the locket to its chain. Planta had been jealously watching the whole proceeding from his corner and did not hear what Abbé Georgel had just whispered to him.

When, a moment later, Cagliostro entered, Rohan immediately sprang up and drew him into one of the window recesses. As the Sicilian's expression was gloomy and forbidding, the Prince did not dare to ask him any questions, but merely poured forth his usual lamentation; "What a long time it is since we have seen each other, my friend; over a fortnight! And all this time I have been in such sore need of your comfort." Cagliostro frowned. "Still no news from Versailles?"

"Still nothing!" The face of the white-haired infant suddenly clouded with an expression of sorrow and anxiety. "It is true a letter is said to be on its way, but . . . I almost dread

its arrival. Ever since I handed over the necklace I have had no news. I have been as it were cut off. Can you understand it, Master? Moreover, I am in great difficulties. Six months ago the Queen begged me for fifty thousand francs for a noble family that had fallen on evil days. My banker, Cerf-Beer, advanced me the sum, and now he is demanding the money, and of course I cannot possibly worry the Queen with trifles of that sort. Cagliostro, you proved to me during those days at Saverne that you knew how to make gold out of lead. I know you will not turn a deaf ear to my entreaties." And he looked imploringly at the Count.

Cagliostro pulled a wry face. "Let us discuss this presently. I must collect my thoughts now." He let himself drop into an armchair, and Rohan glided away on tip-toe. In a moment the whole company was silent and respectfully watched the fat magician.

He for his part gazed with a gloomy and preoccupied air in front of him. Make gold as he had done at Saverne! *Male-detto!* The gold he had produced at Saverne had cost him a lot of money, exactly as much money as the gold was worth which they had found in the crucible! It is true that the stir the affair had made had been well worth the expense—but to be asked to produce fifty thousand francs at once! If he were Primate of the Freemasons, well and good! The Order could well afford a trifling leakage of that sort. But he was not Primate yet. On the other hand he could not leave Rohan in the lurch. The Cardinal was his third iron in the fire. The Prince Cardinal, who was related to the highest nobility in Europe, was the man who was to secure the sanction of the Pope for Egyptian Freemasonry as a sort of universal Blue Order. It was to be an Order which would combat the disintegrating spirit of Protestantism and of Rationalism and, like the old mediæval Orders of Knighthood, would be bound by a Papal Bull to practise the doctrines of the great Coft and strive, even at the cost of bloodshed, to do away with schism. By this means all his enemies would be struck down at one fell

swoop, those in St. Petersburg, as well as those in Mitau, London and Königsberg—the foolish rationalists and heretical wise-
acres who had made it impossible for him to remain in many a fair city. The fact that he had not wreaked vengeance upon them was gnawing at his heart; and in this Rome was to help him. But the bridge to Rome was Rohan. By some supreme effort the prince must at last be compelled to draw up a memorandum to be laid before the Sacred College; and to-day was the day to put the third iron in the fire.

Suddenly he sprang noisily to his feet. A servant had announced Madame de la Motte. With a great display of vehemence Cagliostro drew his sword. All eyes were turned towards the door.

Slight and graceful the Wasp buzzed in. She was followed by a child of fifteen with a pretty little pink and white face and deep blue eyes. Cagliostro stepped up to the young girl, and with a jerk pulled the thin cloak from her slight shoulders. She wore a simple long white dress with a blue sash, and a small white apron upon which was embroidered the silver star of the Order.

"The New Dove," the Master announced, and laid his sword upon her.

"My niece, Mademoiselle Marie de la Tour," explained Jeanne, with a charming curtsy, and then took a seat at some distance from the couple.

A gesture from the Master called for silence. Cagliostro led the girl who sidled, erect and unembarrassed beside him, to the table on which stood the crystal bowl. Thereupon he exclaimed with a deafening roar, "Join with me in thanking our dear Madame de la Motte for having presented us with this ideal Dove—blue eyes, sensitive, born in the sign of Capricornus, and a virgin. Where else could one find all these attributes united?"

He gave Jeanne a covert wink, but her face remained grave as death. Not by the movement of a single muscle did she betray the fact that the august Master, whose soul appeared

so exalted that the dissipations of his body were unable to defile it, had for several evenings in succession entertained himself very thoroughly with Mademoiselle Marie, and by no means mystically, but in keeping with the most ardent Sicilian taste, of which the girl had given the most entertaining description. Aye, and the sign of Capricornus! . . . God in Heaven, what will one not do in order to please one's friends!

Scarcely had the ideal Dove gazed into the crystal bowl when she fell as it were miraculously into a magnetic sleep. Laying the sword, with which he had previously described the magic circle, once more upon the girl's head, Cagliostro began his old game of exorcism and cross-questioning. It was all at his fingers' ends. The fifteen-year-old innocent immediately saw the great Coft in the flesh before her mind's eye, and evinced a childish surprise to find that he bore such a strong resemblance to the Grand Master. She also saw a dignified old man in white robes trimmed with ermine and wearing a tiara. He was seated on a throne and was making friendly signs to the great Coft and giving him a brotherly kiss. While this vision was being described the Abbé Georgel suddenly grew very attentive. Then she saw the venerable old man surrounded by a crowd of warriors clad in azure blue, who were kneeling before him with silver pentagrams on their breasts, white leather aprons about their hips, swords red with rust in their hands—and he blessed them.

But suddenly what did she see? The Master who could only deal with his own innovations in the programme, pulled a wry face. The Dove saw a precious jewel longing for the light lying at the bottom of a dark chest. Thin white aristocratic fingers opened the chest and took the jewel out. Small well-tended hands laid it round a shimmering neck—Rohan went red and white in turns—and she saw a fair woman with grey eyes, a small aquiline nose and a protruding under lip looking at herself in the glass, from which a handsome rosy but white-haired man's face gazed back at her—Rohan could hardly breathe. . . . She saw the pale thin lips of the great lady approach the

surface of the mirror . . . with a faint cry the Dove suddenly collapsed. The Master, who had thrown down his sword, had stepped brutally up to her and had pulled her closed eyes roughly open. His lips were pouting in a broad smile. Involuntarily Jeanne had sprung to her feet.

With a cheerful and innocent expression Cagliostro turned to the astonished assembly. "I was only making a little test to be sure that the Dove was not making it up. But I found everything all right. Her pupils were turned inwards. She was sleeping. I will now awaken the child." He made a few somewhat too careless strokes of his hand over her brow and eyes, and Mademoiselle Marie, breathing deeply and looking dazed, immediately returned from the realms of ether to reality. She staggered magnificently and was caught in the Master's kind strong arms and led to her anxious aunt. She seemed about to faint, but Jeanne quickly restored her by means of smelling salts.

Lorenza now opened her eyes and fixed her calm steady gaze on Jeanne, whose movements seemed to be somewhat hectic. Rohan once more led the divine Master aside, and with a beaming face assured him of his eternal and invincible gratitude. "As soon as an opportunity offers, I shall go with Georgel to Saverne, in order to draft the first memorandum to the College of Cardinals." The Master patted him benevolently on the shoulder. The fifty thousand francs would be child's play, and no later than to-morrow he would set the crucible containing the lead on the furnace. Meanwhile Countess Vergennes was eagerly trying to convince the honest Planta, whose Swiss straightforwardness found it difficult to believe in all these blue misty wonders; while the Jesuit stood aloof, stony, expressionless, but intently alert, in his corner, his clear and thoughtful eyes turned to Rohan.

Cagliostro caressed the innocent young thing of fifteen, and looking at Jeanne with guileless wide open eyes observed: "In spite of my long experience with Doves, I have often thought that the inner visions during sleep come of their own accord

and are not under my guidance. A versatile child!" His ringing laughter gave the sign for the meeting to break up. Jeanne went up to Rohan and looked significantly into his eyes. The Prince immediately signed to Baron de Planta, and the latter led her into the Cardinal's study.

Happy and well pleased, the Cardinal entered the study a few minutes later. The red rays of a glorious sunset poured in through the lofty bow windows which were wide open. Without moving, the fascinating royal Wasp of the sinful blood of the Valois looked mysteriously into the Prince's face, and his boyish heart immediately beat fast. "Madam? . . ." he stammered in agitation. She handed him a dainty little gold-edged note. He hastily tore open the envelope. "In view of the steps which I now think should be taken in order shortly to give you the post to which your gifts entitle you, it is essential for you to be absent for a while. So return to Saverne until you are summoned. It ought not to be long. Meanwhile, may nothing prevent you from thinking of your friend, Marie Antoinette of France."

Friend! She had actually written "friend"! "Pack up, Planta. We shall be off to Saverne early to-morrow. Georgel will have to prepare the papers for the memorandum and will follow us shortly. We shall busy ourselves in Saverne writing on behalf of Cagliostro." Rohan smiled like a happy boy. She had written—"friend"! The Master was going to make gold for him! Oh, what a lovely world!

Timidly Jeanne approached him. "Monseigneur, March is already here." He looked at her in astonishment. "I do not understand, Madam." A deep flush suffused her cheeks. "Monseigneur promised me a little help in February." Rohan clasped his hands to his head. "Oh, forgive me, dear child; the King's Grand Almoner must have forgotten this little private matter of the Cardinal's. Let me see, you usually receive five louis. To-morrow I will have you paid ten, and will add fifteen out of my own pocket. That will last you quite a long time,

will it not?" And he smiled good-naturedly at her. With tears in her eyes, she thanked him.

Paris was a large city. There was much traffic in her streets and many vehicles rattled through her gateways to the open country—flies, coaches, court carriages, and peasant conveyances, going all higgledy-piggledy to and from the city. Many coaches went out on the following morning, but only two of them were led by the invisible power of the mysterious star of upheavals, Uranus, the father of madness and rebellion.

One of the carriages went in an easterly direction, the other westwards. The first, drawn by six milk-white English mares, headed for Alsace; the other, an ordinary post-chaise, proceeded towards the port of Boulogne-sur-Mer. In the former sat the Cardinal accompanied by his two friends, the Abbé and Planta. In his pocket he had the draft of a memorandum which was to put a new complexion on the world—the treatise on the sacred universal Order of the Blue Freemasons. In the other, all by himself, sat Nicolas de la Motte. Never for a moment did he allow his travelling bag out of his sight, for in it there was a heavy steel casket full to overflowing with beautiful glittering stones, which, in obedience to the command of the resourceful Wasp, he was going to dispose of in London, so that the blood of St. Rémy de Luz de Valois might make its triumphant entry once more into Bar-sur-Aube. The two carriages had nothing in common. Their destinations, occupants and intentions were poles asunder. Nevertheless, there was one point of similarity between them. They both sheltered the hope that the tide was about to turn, that seven fat years of cloudless happiness were to follow on the lean years. This hope travelled east and it travelled west. But Cagliostro remained in Paris delighted to be rid of them.

Fancy making gold out of lead! The second of the two couriers who arrived from Saverne with the good news that the Cardinal's work on the memorandum was making fair progress also brought an urgent request for the promised fifty

thousand francs to be sent at the earliest possible moment. Or had the first alchemistic process failed? The matter was extremely pressing, as Cerf-Beer was dunning him for the money.

The courier arrived just as Cagliostro was about to enter his carriage. The Cardinal's letter made him change his mind. He ordered the horses to be taken away and set forth on foot without any definite object in his mind. This eternal question of money! He must get it somehow, otherwise Rohan would become suspicious and then it would be all over with Rome. To the devil with the Cardinal's money troubles! He sauntered peevishly past the Bastille. A prisoner with a large escort of mounted police had just been consigned there, and with much grating and creaking the drawbridge was hauled up. He smiled grimly. If he wished, he could in the twinkling of an eye, have the gallant Prince of the Church brought to the Bastille, and then he would be rid of him. Fifty thousand francs! Why did that infant of a Rohan allow himself to be involved in such dubious adventures? Jeanne had squandered all the money by now. For Jeanne too the Bastille would be very wholesome. In spite of his vexation, he was obliged to laugh. Rohan and Jeanne! What a lovely pair! How they would begin to squirm on the 1st of August!

He wondered whether she had already sold the diamonds. If she had, then he might get the fifty thousand francs from her. Would it not be best, after all, to tell her the plain truth? With this auburn-haired beggar princess of the bankrupt Valois, he might found a boundless Empire, an Empire of trickery, of mines and countermines, the world-wide Empire of intellectual mumbo-jumbo, with the standard of blue steam flying above its throne of gold froth. No, she was too good for the Bastille!

But how was he to get hold of the fifty thousand francs?

As he wandered aimlessly about on the beautiful April afternoon, he reached a street consisting entirely of small old-fashioned houses. Was it not here? He stopped before a mouldering old house and examined the image carved in stone of a man and woman in old-fashioned dress. "Rue des Ecrivains,"

Launay had said, the damned fop who was making eyes at that goose Lorenza. "There lived your great predecessor!" The words had savoured of insolent irony. Cagliostro tried to decipher the inscription and hieroglyphics which were written in Gothic letters round the heads of the two people.

Here, four hundred years ago, the necromancer, Nicolas Flamel, had lived with his beloved Pernille. He was a poor scribbler, who unexpectedly became the benefactor of the poor, distributing alms, building hospitals, and even erecting churches. Such things cost a good deal of money even in those days. Whereupon rumour had become busy with the poor scribe, and had said that he possessed the philosopher's stone, and was also on intimate terms with His Majesty the Prince of Darkness. The voice of slander even whispered that his wealth was due to the fact that he was secretly hand-in-glove with the Jews who about that time had been banished from France. But as he built churches nobody attempted to lay hands on him. In the end he died in a green old age quietly by his own hand.

A few years after his death treasure hunters began digging in his cellar. But the busybodies found nothing except coal, and various cylinders, retorts and crucibles, the latter of which were filled with a hard brazen but quite valueless material. But it was well known that Flamel had been an alchemist and had made gold. Thousands of hollow-eyed disciples rushed forward and, inspired by his glorious example, flung themselves with fresh fervour into the arms of the hermetic sciences, allowing thousands of good ducats to go up in blue smoke without achieving their object. Still they did not lose hope: hope fed and clothed them, ever more miserably, it is true. But they knew that the secret of *materia prima* could only be won by self denial, and the belief that they would one day discover it was stamped upon their pale and careworn brows.

Centuries slipped by and added to the myth of Flamel, the pious goldmaker; and, just as a lighthouse attracts flocks of bewildered birds, so his life of self-sacrifice drew hundreds of disciples towards a bitter fate, which forced them to starve

in honour or to seek a precarious livelihood in dishonour as charlatans.

Dusk was falling softly with its violet shadows blurring all the outlines and hard edges. Deep in thought, Cagliostro stared up at the house. The passers-by could not help smiling. They were used to the spectacle of sight-seers. Ever and anon inquisitive strangers would stand before the house and contemplate it with feverish eyes, as if they could lure the secrets of its past from the crumbling stones. And here was another of these fellows, they thought with a smile as they passed. But the expression of the strange little man and the slight curve in the corners of his mouth seemed rather to denote secret amusement and inner cheerfulness.

Yes, truth to tell, he and the old house had much to say to each other. Had Flamel really made gold, and was there a word of truth in the so-called magistry? He shook his head in vexation. No, he for one did not believe it! For if there were such a thing as a simple recipe for turning dross into gold, how was it that it had not fallen into his hands, the favourite of fortune that he was, despite the fact that he had looked for it in all the principal countries of the world? Brooding darkly, he stared at the house of the humble Nicolas Flamel.

Was he, fat Giuseppe, not in fact a gold maker? *O vanitas mundi!* In his Sicilian soup kitchen the spirits of his foolish contemporaries were merrily stewed over imaginary fires until their purses sweated gold, to the great joy of the victims themselves.

Make gold out of lead? Fifty thousand francs? A trifle! A complacent and unctuous smile broke over his lips. The spirit of centuries of gold-seeking had cast its shadow upon him and had been merciful to him. Why had he not thought of it before? Everything had to be done within a fortnight.

He cast a look at the house and then turned away whistling as if he were about to go. But a mysterious goblin seemed to hold him back by the collar. He returned to the house, and with his sword-stick scratched a little of the earth which lay

under the stone steps leading to the front door. Then picking it up he kissed it solemnly, threw it over his left shoulder back at the house, and at the same time stretched out his first and little finger in the direction of Paris. "Thou shalt bring me luck, thou old blockhead of a Flamel!" Whereupon, with a half-audible grunt, he toddled home.

The great white stars which had risen over Paris on that night in April looked calmly and gravely down upon him. They did not even twinkle, those cold white stars, as they looked down upon the man they knew, who, himself but a handful of earth scratched up from the superstitions of the crowd and thrown back over the left shoulder of eternity, was destined noisily, nonsensically, voraciously and lasciviously to become the last and most dazzling myth of his century.

On the evening of the following day the usual weekly meeting at the Palais Vergennes took place. Cagliostro was accustomed to attend these gatherings in order to deliver lectures on magic or describe mystical processes. The lights were burning brightly and the whole of the aristocracy of Paris was already assembled, when the Master at last made his appearance. There was a murmur of voices which stopped immediately when the company beheld his amazing costume. On his white wig he wore a green turban adorned with an extraordinary nine-pointed star of yellow topaz.

The old lady, his hostess, rustled forth to meet her guest. "I have a surprise for you to-day, Count. . . ." In loud sepulchral tones he roared through the silence, "Nothing on this earth can any longer surprise me!" Lorenza gazed intently at him. Would the surprise fail to surprise Giuseppe after all?

Cagliostro felt her looking at him and smiling sweetly, he stepped up to her. He greeted her and the Marquis de Launay, who was at her side, with extreme heartiness. "Yesterday an important prisoner of state was taken to the Bastille, Monsieur le Gouverneur,"—the smile with which Cagliostro pronounced these words was half indulgent, half careless. The Marquis

looked at him in astonishment. This strange Sicilian seemed to know everything! But before he had time to ask any questions, Countess Vergennes exclaimed triumphantly: "There he is!" and all eyes were immediately turned towards the door.

A small slight man shuffled through the lofty folding doors into the room. His dress was strange and garish. He wore a white wig and an exceedingly long white beard. His complexion was a bright lemon yellow and his eyes were two merry little slits. He stumbled awkwardly towards his hostess who immediately introduced him to the company. "This is the famous scholar, Christoforo del Verde della Stellanuova, who has travelled all over the East."

Truth to tell, he was indeed a globe trotter and a foreigner to boot. The influence of many lands and many dialects had left their peculiar stamp upon his speech—English, German, Dutch, and above all, Italian elements composed his treasury of words founded on the basis of a broad Neapolitan simplicity. With commendable modesty, he waved aside the flattering introduction of the Countess. "*Per bacco*, ladies and gentlemen, I am no scholar. I am merely an enquirer, who has heard this house extolled by his Lodge Brothers in Fozzuoli, as the centre of the spiritual life of the day, by Jove. On my return from a little trip to India, I set foot in Paris this morning. *Maledetto*, my most pressing duty seemed to be to pay my respects to Madonna Contessa. And she was good enough to suggest, ladies and gentlemen, that I should bore you this evening with my foolishness. *Santo Gesu!* What a disappointment I am preparing for you! For my poor little pilgrimages only took me to the most ordinary places—Arabia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, Upper and Lower India, and so forth, in short, countries which all of you know only too well. *Sacre de bleu!*"

His cunning slits of eyes wandered over the faces of the company and suddenly rested with astonishment on Cagliostro. "Oh, but I am sure that gentleman over there in the green turban of the prophet, knows much more about it than I do."

The illustrious company was delighted with so much humility

and modesty. And what accurate note this learned traveller made of people! Did he not recognise at once that Cagliostro came from the East? And yet nobody had told him the name of the man who wore the turban. It was as if they had all conspired together to make the thrilling drama of the meeting of these two great men all the more interesting by keeping them in the dark.

Countess Vergennes turned graciously to the traveller from the East. "This morning you dropped a hint about an interesting meeting you had in Asia. Will you not tell us about it, sir?"

Christoforo del Verde della Stellanuova found great difficulty in taking his eyes off Cagliostro. He smiled absent-mindedly, passed a hand over his brow, and said thoughtfully, "Quite right, my meeting with the howling Dervish in Brussa. A most remarkable Dervish, *corpo di bacco!* He spoke every language under the sun and looked a mere boy, although he was much more than a hundred years old, by the blood of Christ! Not only did he tell me this himself, but all those who knew him swore that it was true. When he heard that I was going to Paris he told me about a Frenchman with whom he was very friendly. Now who was it? *Santo porco!* I could hardly believe my ears! But, God help my soul! it is literally true!" Then crossing himself three times, he added, "This Frenchman was Nicolas Flamel, the goldmaker, who must have been dead for over four hundred years!"

A murmur ran through the hall. Cagliostro's iron chin was thrust commandingly forward. After a short impressive silence the speaker continued softly. "Flamel is still alive! Yes, the Dervish swore to me that he was! The pious goldmaker only disappeared about four hundred years ago in order to escape being burnt alive, because he possessed the philosopher's stone. The doctors who said he was dead had been bribed with large sums of money. My Dervish saw Flamel only a little while ago on the blooming banks of the Ganges, where he is leading a life of wisdom and virtue with his beloved Pernille!"

Blinking rapidly, he was silent. A hum of voices filled the room. Some thought the story incredible. Others were only too glad to believe everything. With a faint smile, the Governor of the Bastille turned to the stranger. "All very interesting, sir! But what proof have we that this meeting on the blooming banks of the Ganges did not merely spring from the blooming imagination of your Dervish?"

Cagliostro nodded sternly. "Very true, Marquis! I am afraid I cannot help reproaching Signor Christoforo del Verde della Stellanuova with excessive credulity. Proofs, sir, proofs! Supernatural happenings cannot be too closely examined under the lens of reason." With a movement of proud scepticism the Master thrust a hand into his breast; whereupon even those who at first believed the tale went over to the side of the unconvinced. People smiled, people made comments.

Somewhat taken aback, the traveller from the East stammered: "Proofs? I might perhaps offer one little proof." Incredulous laughter was the answer. Meekly the poor stranger continued: "The Dervish charged me to greet someone who is living in France to-day on Flamel's behalf. For Flamel was a friend of this person. If he really exists it may be possible to get at the truth of the matter."

The Marquis de Launay interposed ironically, "It would surely be difficult, even for Monsieur de Sartines to find this man among five and twenty million Frenchmen. What is his name?"

"He is said to change his name every century, the Dervish explained. It was a most uncommon name, and I wrote it down in order not to forget it." The traveller drew an extremely crumpled slip of paper from his pocket, and with much ceremony putting a pair of glasses to his eyes, read out slowly, "Count Cagliostro of Palermo."

Great tears coursed down the Master's cheeks. The whole assembly looked at him in amazement. Slowly he strode across the hall to the bewildered Neapolitan and clasped him in silence to his breast. "Thank you, thank you! What a long time

it is since I heard of my friend! Forgive me for having pulled you up so sharply a moment ago. There are so many false prophets about at the present moment, that it is more than ever necessary to be on one's guard." And releasing him from his arms, he cast a haughty look at the crowd. "Flamel is still alive! I have known it for a long time. I met him three hundred years ago on that portion of the globe only recently discovered by blind mankind, and now known as Australia. There is nothing surprising in the fact that Flamel should have lived to such a great age. Like me, he possesses the secret of regeneration."

There was a tremendous outburst of applause and the excitement and enthusiasm threatened to surpass all limits. But Cagliostro paid no heed to it. He took the arm of the foreigner and drew him into a corner. No one dared to interrupt their eager conversation. With grave and mysterious gestures they seemed to be drinking each other's health again and again.

"Now even I am converted! In the face of such proofs, every doubt must be silenced," said the Marquis de Launay turning to Lorenza. But he immediately added in an anxious whisper, "What is the matter, dearest? You look so pale and tired."

"I do not like the stranger," she replied drily, and rising to her feet, she went over to the Countess Vergennes.

All around there were flashing eyes and glowing faces. Now the irrefutable proof of the possibility of regeneration had been produced. In addition to Cagliostro, there was another man alive in the world who was centuries old and who also had a wife centuries old. Regeneration—that was what the prematurely senile pleasure-loving men and women of Paris society needed. Regeneration at any price! But would the Master reveal the secret? All over the room whispering groups were formed. The Marquis de Launay and the old Countess de Vergennes were the centre of a group engaged in eager debate. Lorenza, pleading a headache, had retired to her hostess's boudoir.

So great was the excitement that nobody seemed to pay

any particular heed when the traveller from the East took his departure, after having stayed but one brief hour. The white-haired Countess, it is true, invited him to visit her, and told him that her house was always open to him. But he begged to be excused and with a smile of embarrassment said that the invisible powers above had told him, now that his mission was fulfilled, to go with all possible speed to the New World, to study the Red Skins and find out whether they were yet ripe for the blessings of Freemasonry. Really and truly, *per bacco!*

Frenzy seemed to have seized the limp muscles and exhausted nerves of the elegant world of Paris. But what had happened here was a very different affair from the first performance of *La Folle Journée* by Sieur Caron de Beaumarchais, which a year previously had whipped the impoverished blood of the fashionable world of Paris into flame. On that occasion it had been a matter of securing the triumph of a revolutionary comedy in the face of the disapproval of the Court, of Breteuil and of Sartines' police force. But now it was a question of the unlimited capacity for pleasure and enjoyment on the part of all. It was a question of infusing new life into blood that had cooled, bones that had calcified, and hair upon which the years had laid their tell-tale colouring. Regeneration. . . . They were one and all ready to sacrifice everything for it.

Cagliostro was sitting by himself in the small blue boudoir. He had asked for ink, paper and sand, and was writing. He was also drinking enormous quantities of liquor, scratching strange signs on the paper and then tearing it up and carefully burning the fragments in the fireplace. A veil of mystery surrounded him.

When a deputation consisting of Princess Soubise, the Countess Vergennes, the Minister d'Aiguillon and the Marquis de Launay came to him, he stared at them angrily with blood-shot eyes. They had come with a petition for him to proceed forthwith to the founding of an Egyptian Lodge and a sister Lodge for women.

He bristled up. It had not been for this that he had come

to Paris! The last ten years spent in founding Lodges had worn him out. All he wanted now was peace and tranquillity to devote himself to the mystic sciences. He required a spell of complete solitude, as his body was once more in need of regeneration.

They appealed to his moral sense of duty. Regeneration! That was precisely the point! It was intolerable that he should continue to withhold this miracle from suffering mankind! His lofty spirit and his great love for his fellows must surely tell him that it was high time to present man with this highest gift of the gods.

He replied that this might possibly be true, but in any case the question would have to be thoroughly examined beforehand. At all events, a grave difficulty stood in the way of granting their request—he had neither the time nor the inclination to devote himself to the wearisome operation of making gold, and the founding of a combined Lodge would demand vast sums of money.

A subscription list was immediately opened, the result of which far exceeded Cagliostro's expectations. It provided a sum not far short of what he wanted, and he felt half inclined to shout with laughter. Make gold? It was only a matter of putting ciphers together.

He now became more accessible, although his brow still seemed clouded with care. There was, unfortunately one more obstacle. The Grand Mistress of the Woman's Lodge would have to be a high-minded woman capable of adjuring all material things, pure and virtuous as a vestal, in order to be able to do the bidding of the great Coft. When he saw the long faces of the members of the deputation he added carelessly that he knew of such a woman, but that for mystic reasons he could not appeal to her personally. They would understand him at once when he mentioned her name—it was Countess Cagliostro. With great paternal dignity, he continued, "Countess Vergennes and Marquis de Launay, I charge you to ask my wife, whom, from very comprehensible reserve, I have hitherto re-

frained from introducing into the dangerous realm of magic, whether, in the interests of humanity, she is willing to take this heavy burden upon her." Whereupon he leant back in his armchair and closed his eyes. They left him.

It was a bitter trial. It took Countess Vergennes almost five minutes before the Marquis, who was in love, could be persuaded to make this sacrifice to his contemporaries. It was only when she pointed to the fact that any objection from his quarter would inevitably compromise Lorenza and bring public scandal upon him—"What material for the lampoonists! Just think, the whole world would laugh at you!"—that he at last gave in and followed her with a sigh into the dainty dimly lighted boudoir.

With an intent gaze Lorenza turned her large, calm, blue eyes on the Marquis. It was so like Giuseppe! By this means he would not only rid himself of the anxiety caused by his thick-blooded jealousy, but would also get vast sums of money into the bargain. *Santa Madonna!* he was ten thousand times shrewder than all of them put together! Oh, if only he could be converted to the Church! But it was useless, he was too fast caught in the claws of the Antichrist! She shuddered. So bitter solitude was to be her lot once more! And her eyes, which still rested on Launay, became hard. Far better endure bitter solitude than constant disappointments caused by miserable weaklings who were prepared to give up their blood for a phantom!

Slowly she rose to her feet. A strange smile curved her lips. Her eyes glided from the questioning and disconcerted eyes of the man to the restless but kindly eyes of the old lady.

"I am ready! Take me to my husband!"

They had all sworn the oath of unity, silence and virtue before the Grand Mistress elect of the First Egyptian Lodge of Isis—the Countesses de Brienne, Dessalles, de Polignac, de Brassal, de Choiseul, the Marquise d'Avricourt, the noble ladies de Boursenne, de Trevières, de la Blache, de la Fare, de Monteil,

de Brehant, de Loménie, de Genlis, not to mention the auburn-haired Countess de la Motte of the House of Valois.

All the magic apparatus was once again installed. Countless statues of Isis were obtained for distribution; the Apis and the camel also figured as stage properties of genuine Egyptian origin, and hieroglyphics and magic characters played their accustomed grand rôle. Neither was Adonai forgotten, and once more the sword swung round, describing the spellbinding circle. Once more the sweating Master stamped violently with his feet, commanding the hostile spirits to stand back. Once more thundered, gurgled and crashed his eternal "*Helion, Melion, Tetragrammaton!*"

Thus really great things were afoot this time. Mesmer paled beside them, and realised how impotent he had become with his isolated establishment and his magnetic baths, which now seemed so dull and tame. As early as May the temporary quarters of the Lodge of Isis in the Palais Vergennes had become the rendezvous for all the ladies of fashion. It was quite too fascinating to belong to a secret society, to give oneself up to uncanny mysticism, to enthuse about Atlantis, to honour the Great Coft and to be kissed five times on the thigh and on the mouth by Count Cagliostro, and to listen to hermetic wisdom and salacious obscenities all in one breath.

Moreover, the Grand Master performed miracles, veritable miracles—there was no possible doubt about it. They had seen it with their own eyes! The Dove, the blue-eyed Mademoiselle de la Tour, was able, in her magic sleep under Cagliostro's guidance, to recognise and describe things both in this world and the world beyond, and to answer every question correctly, and even to guess the sex of a fœtus in the body of a pregnant woman. It was really too amusing to watch the innocent young girl of fifteen babbling the most indecent things in the world with her beautiful red mouth, things of which, in her waking hours, she certainly had not the remotest conception.

And besides. . . .

Initiated members categorically declared that Cagliostro had held naked Lodges with the ladies whom he had raised to the rank of Mistresses, and that he had not admitted his wife to these seances, but only such confidential friends as the Marquis de Launay, the Duc d'Angoulême. Even Monsieur had attended them, the fat Prince, Louis Philippe. These naked Lodges, which had been held with the object of showing human beings to each other in the state of original innocence, had ended in something of the nature of orgies, and apparently Madame de la Motte, in particular, had been somewhat abandoned. It is true that the participators denied the truth of these rumours. But the more they denied it, the more did the masses grin and become confirmed in their belief.

Every lady of fashion in Paris who considered herself anybody, had of course to belong to the Lodge. Enthusiasm rose so high that Cagliostro's portrait was to be seen everywhere. The ladies had it painted on their fans and presented their husbands and lovers with snuff-boxes, handkerchiefs and purses bearing the likeness of the Great Orient.

In a few weeks the fame of the thaumaturgist had become so great that he had to turn his attention to the foundation of a man's Lodge. Shortly afterwards, owing to the press of applicants, a second had to be opened, and very soon Cagliostro had fulfilled the boast he had made to Baudard. Urged on by their wives, stimulated by their own curiosity, and inspired with the fine hope of shortly being initiated into the secret not only of the Magistery and of the *materia prima*, but also of the priceless boon of regeneration, the Parisian Freemasons had gone over in their thousands to Cagliostro. No sacrifice of money had been too great for this object, no act of infidelity too monstrous. They poured through the Egyptian gate into the promised land of Canaan, and meanwhile their own Lodges yawned empty, scorned and forgotten.

The Master smiled. Make gold out of lead? Certainly! Fifty thousand francs? Child's play! There was only one thing that cast a shadow on the golden castles in the air on the

horizon of Palermo. What had come over Lorenza? Why had she, without further ado, consented to become Grand Mistress of the Lodge, although the whole of Freemasonry was so profoundly distasteful to her? Was she aiming at doing him an injury? Pah! In any case he did not allow her to learn any secrets. And how could she injure him, the darling of the aristocracy? She was far too stupid for that, the sulky Roman goose! At all events there was no need for him to be jealous any longer, for hundreds of pairs of eyes were now watching over the chastity of the Mistress. He rubbed his hands. How splendidly he had thought it all out.

The mild spring had been followed by a fine warm summer. The June morning had been clear as crystal. The day had been spent in the usual round of business here, there and everywhere; errands, visits, consultations had followed on each other's heels, and now that dusk was falling upon the warm red glow of the sunset the Master was able once again to look back on a successful day. Not only had he enrolled over a hundred new members, but a most brilliant report had come that morning from the Mother Lodge at Lyons, describing its flourishing condition. Furthermore, a letter had arrived from the Cardinal, who had only just found time to send his thanks for the sum of money which had just reached him and which was a further proof of the supernatural gifts with which Heaven had endowed the Master. He added that the memorandum for the College of Cardinals was almost finished, and that he had already taken steps in Rome to secure it a favourable reception.

Yes, it had been a successful day, and he chuckled contentedly. Jeanne had been to see him. What a fine woman! All of a sudden she was swimming in money and imagined that not a soul would notice it. But the dear little stony seed had begun to bring forth the desired fruit. Meanwhile, it was six weeks to pay day. A devilish little minx! She did not seem to care a fig!

He laughed aloud. Benito entered and was also obliged to laugh. In the gathering gloom he might almost have been taken for the Master. He wore the latter's familiar three-cornered musketeer hat trimmed with white, and the bottle green coat with the bronze buttons. He had stuffed as many cushions as possible beneath the jabot, so that his small, slight little form was now almost as stout as Cagliostro's own. Even his walk was not as shuffling as usual, but grave and ponderous like his master's, while his face had artfully been transformed from flat Neapolitan roguery into the rocky wildness of Sicily.

Cagliostro took careful stock of him. "People will certainly take you for me," he remarked contentedly, and then added with some curiosity, "Are there many people outside to-day?"

"Not more than usual, *maestro*," said Cagliostro's double. And thrusting his hand into his breast, and snorting and roaring violently like his master, he continued, "A beggar has fallen asleep just opposite on the other side of the road; he might be a confederate of Madame de la Motte. Two carriages with drawn blinds are standing at either end of the street, presumably on instructions from Monsieur de St. James. A drunken man is just being given some broth in the yard, and to judge from his tipsy questions he should be a messenger from the Church. In the direction of the Bastille a rider has been trotting up and down for the last hour so conspicuously disguised as a civilian that one can surely not be far wrong in suspecting him to be one of Monsieur de Sartines' detectives. In short, in the wonderful words of Mahomet in his six hundred and sixty-sixth sura, 'Let there be life!'"

Cagliostro oozed with delight. "You will most certainly be something yet, you scamp! Now just you get on with your job and draw the spies after you, so that I may get away unobserved. I feel quite proud to think that for months now I have been besieged day after day by these strange guards of honour. If the idiots only knew that one servant who sleeps with a different chambermaid every night is worth whole battalions of such spies! When did you last go with Rosalie?"

Benito made a grotesque attempt to thrust his chin forward like his master. But his effort was doomed to failure as there was no chin worth mentioning there. "The day before yesterday, *Excelenza!* I like her much better than the lady house-keeper at Monsieur Baudard's. She is so cuddlesome and squeaks so sweetly. I followed your lordship's advice and questioned her between our kisses when we were in bed. Monsieur de la Motte got to know the lady in question—your Lordship knows whom I mean—in the Palais Royal. She is supposed to be very like the Queen, though very much more beautiful. Madame de la Motte and the lady in question quarrelled long ago. By the bye, Monsieure de la Motte is returning from England to-morrow or the day after to-morrow and then they are all going to move to Bar-sur-Aube."

Cagliostro's expression suddenly became thoughtful. "Good! Well, here's ten louis for you. You will go to the Palais Royal and try to find the lady in question. I must speak to her as soon as possible. Do you understand? And steer your way between Scylla and Charybdis as best you can."

A moment later the carriage rattled out of the court and from behind a blind Cagliostro watched the result. He had to smile. The whole street suddenly seemed to become alive. Carriages, riders, drunken men, monks, labourers, and many others whom Benito had not suspected, hurried away, and five minutes later the Sicilian was able, in plain shabby clothes, to leave the house secretly and unrecognised.

He had not far to go. Immediately behind the Bastille, which was only about a quarter of an hour's walk from his house, in the deep shadow of the bastion a plain cabriolet drawn by two horses was waiting. Cagliostro stopped and tapped the pavement three times with his sword. The carriage immediately drew up, a lackey sprang from the box and opened the door. "The lily," he whispered . . . "shall flourish!" added the Sicilian, roughly completing the password. Stepping in, he closed the door and away they went.

It was a long drive. Dusk turned to night. Speeding along

by the Seine, they had soon left Paris behind and were gliding along under the pale moonlight through the Bois de Boulogne. They passed Bagatelle, the Count of Artois' country seat, and turning into a romantic park laid out in the English style, at last reached a beautiful little meadow, surrounded by woods with a hillock behind. Here the carriage stopped. A masked man stepped up to it and bowed. "May I request your Lordship to follow me?"

A winding footpath led through a pitch dark shrubbery, with lofty trees on either side, to a clearing in the distance, in the middle of which a small thatched cottage stood. Cagliostro recognised the place. It was the deserted retreat of a misogynistic hermit. Truly the place was well chosen!

A candle was brought into the little room, the floor of which was strewn with moss and leaves. By the side of a table on which there stood some bottles of old Lafitte, two chairs were placed, on one of which sat the Chief of Police of Paris. He bowed affably, though somewhat ironically. "Have I guessed your tastes, Count Cagliostro?"

The Sicilian grinned and dropped into the other chair. "Indeed you have; it makes up for the terribly long journey!"

Sartines hospitably filled the glasses and holding his own up to the candle, remarked casually, "But why all this anxiety about being observed, dear Count? Who are these mysterious people who, according to your letter, dog your footsteps?"

Cagliostro drank eagerly and laid his glass down with a bang. "Well, Monsieur de Sartines, to-day, for instance, there was your spy, disguised as a civilian on horseback. By the way he is not a very good rider."

"Oh well, you must not be hard on me. After all, what are the police there for, except to obtain information?" So saying Sartines blew out the candle. The broad rays of the pale moon streamed through the window into the room. In the slivery blue light, the wine assumed a strange dark opaque glow. Sartines' hard voice had a significant ring. "And now, Count Cagliostro, since I have shown myself willing to fall

in with all the wishes expressed in your letter yesterday, will you be so good as to do me the honour of telling me the details of the conspiracy which has come to your knowledge?"

Cagliostro filled his own glass and drank. The fact that his companion had extinguished the candle was comprehensible enough. He merely wanted to escape the Master's compelling eyes. And the fact that he was ironical—well, what alternative was there for the Chief of the Police? But possibly the cell belonging to a misogynistic recluse was a hit at the Lodge of Isis? He decided to attack.

"What do you think of my Egyptian Freemasonry?"

Sartines smiled. "A pleasant society game, the main object of which, I presume, is to provide cover for certain little love affairs. Forgive me if in so saying I have wounded your self-esteem."

Ah ha! He might have foreseen that they would try to sniff out his relationship to Jeanne! Well let them try! The only thing to fear was the inquisitive nose of the Spanish greyhound. But even he had not made a very deep impression on Cagliostro. He folded his arms calmly. "I congratulate you, Monsieur de Sartines. Your intelligence department works admirably! But this is not what we have met to discuss. What I want to know is, what post I may reckon on holding if I reveal my secret to you."

In matter of fact tones, Sartines replied, "What would you like, sir?"

"It is little enough," said the fat little man. His whisper was imperious, warm and cheerful. "It is little enough, when you take into consideration that it is a question of a colossal conspiracy, which may cost the Bourbons their throne and the Queen her lily."

Sartines' hand trembled as he reached out for his glass. "Well, well, sir, if you are not being deceived, it seems to me we might rope in a fine bunch of criminals. And your price?"

Snorting emphatically, Cagliostro replied, "I wish to return

to private life. My price? Well, well, let us be modest! I would be content with the post of Finance Minister of France."

Sartines gave a hoarse laugh. "Very moderate indeed, sir! And what are we to do with Monsieur de Calonne?"

"You will ask him to resign his office, and by way of compensation you will give him a nice pension and a beautiful mistress."

"Madame de la Motte, perhaps?" said Sartines, somewhat frivolously.

"Why not, if she is willing?" The Sicilian's voice vibrated with proud disdain. "But to return to our little business. Monsieur de Sartines is far too clever not to perceive that the exposure of the conspiracy in which the whole of the western world is involved, would do much to increase the reputation of the Chief of Police. Baron Breteuil is not indispensable. What about the Ministry of the Interior, sir?"

Sartines stared thoughtfully into the pale romantic moonlight. What if the Italian adventurer were speaking the truth? The Paris police did not know much about his early life, but the little they had discovered sufficed to prove how extraordinarily successful he had been. Was it really improbable that all the revolutionary attempts and crimes of late years should have proceeded from one hand, and emanated from one brain? To get to the root of all this agitation meant annihilating the conspiracy, in which case Sartines would be the saviour of France, and Marie Antoinette, with her constant fear of revolution, would be bound to make the conqueror of the hydra of sedition Minister of the Interior. He smiled sullenly. Breteuil was Minister. . . . Why should not Sartines be Minister? Suddenly, however, a painful suspicion occurred to his mind.

"You are a friend of Prince Rohan, Count Cagliostro. By an—hm!—accident, I happen to have seen one of your letters to the handsome prelate. Now the Cardinal is known to be one of Baron Breteuil's enemies." A dark question lay in his slowly spoken words.

The Sicilian's heart trembled, and he moistened his lips with

his tongue. "A Mont Blanc, a veritable Mont Blanc of suspicion! We shall not make any headway, sir, if you regard me as capable of such clumsy plots. I am not such a blockhead as to allow myself to be made the cat's paw of a dear white headed infant. I wish you would have a little more respect, Monsieur de Sartines, for Count Cagliostro's astuteness! I do not ask you to trust me, but you might at least do me the honour of assuming that my plan has been well thought out." And lo! the sad heavy eyes set to work again, like gimlets they pierced their way into the brain of the dry Chief of Police. Almost involuntarily Sartines lifted a cold moist hand towards them. The room was dark, and yet those dreadful eyes shone softly with a leaden shimmer.

He looked away. "You are right, Count. I made a mistake." In a strange sleepy voice he added, "And when. . . ."

Cagliostro emptied the last bottle. Whereupon he added with violent and rancorous gravity. "I will give you six weeks, until the night of the 31st of July and the 1st of August, when you will hand me a signed decree made out in my name. Then I will take you to a place on French soil where in a round subterranean vault you will find all the material to justify your taking immediate steps. And now I wish you a pleasant night's rest."

With great deliberation he drew out his thick watch and allowed the case to snap three times, and then stepped heavily out into the bright moonlight. Paralysing fatigue seemed to course through Sartines' blood; he was too weak even to rise from his chair. Oh, those dreadful eyes! A sort of leaden weariness forced him to close his heavy eyelids.

What could be the meaning of it? Had not Cagliostro intended to come last night? Jeanne gave a faint smile. Something very important must have prevented him, for otherwise. . . . She chuckled and held a fine lace handkerchief to her mouth, while with charming grace she tripped down the gloomy staircase which led from her house to the Rue Neuve St. Gilles.

Now he would be too late! Nicolas was coming back to-day and on the morrow they were going to Bar-sur-Aube, so he would not see her again for a long time.

She knocked. The little door of the Minims' monastery opened before her and her expression immediately became grave and dignified, almost as dignified as the pious black silk dress trimmed with precious pale yellow Brussels lace which she wore. The Brother, who was accustomed to her daily visits, informed her that Father Loth had not been well in the night, and could not hear her confession that day, but had arranged for a substitute, who was awaiting her at that moment. For a second Jeanne was half inclined to turn back; to confess to a stranger did not please her. But she thought better of it. It might perhaps be amusing to convince an unknown priest of her holiness!

Kneeling on the stool of the confessional, she endeavoured, despite the gloom of the church, to study the features of the priest. His profile looked stern and ascetic. He had a large aquiline nose, hollow cheeks, thin bitter lips, and his evil pointed chin gave an appearance of fanaticism to his swarthy features. He kept his eyes closed.

After the usual preliminaries were over, Jeanne turned her eyes with the utmost childish simplicity to the dark face and whispered, "Father, I have been terribly wicked. The sin of adultery lies on my heart." She knew from experience that this never failed. He would certainly raise his eyes now. But he did not look at her. He muttered sullenly, as if to himself, "Speak more plainly, my child. To gauge the extent of your guilt, I must know all the circumstances."

She had to laugh to herself, though this did not prevent copious tears from rolling over the beautiful peach-like bloom of her cheeks. Penitently she lisped, "I had an erotic dream about a man who is not my husband!" As she spoke she buried her flaming face in her hands.

At the same moment a harsh voice hissed menacingly in her ear, "If you value your life, Madam, do not stir. Remain in the

attitude of a penitent. I have something to tell you." Jeanne's heart stopped beating. Only for an instant, it is true. Should she cry out? That might lead to complications! The voice of the terrible Father Confessor had sounded hideously convincing. Whatever could have possessed Father Loth to send her such a priest?

As if he had guessed her thoughts, her mysterious tormentor in the confessional continued, "Father Loth knows nothing about this. We gave him a sleeping draught yesterday. I am no priest, although of course I had to pretend to be one, in order to speak to Madame without having any witnesses present. We discovered that this place is the only one in which you are not watched. Certain persons and institutions in Paris are dogging your footsteps with the greatest assiduity. But we wanted to get in touch with you, provided of course, that we could do so unobserved. Be careful! A priest is approaching. Pretend to be continuing your confession." He was silent.

Jeanne still did not understand. Was she being watched? By whom? Cold fear crept over her body. In a quivering voice she whispered, "Oh Father, I am a great sinner. I have also sinned against the seventh commandment."

The steps which had been approaching passed on, and the voice close to her ear sounded possibly a little milder.

"I know, I know. We know a good deal, Madam; more than you dream of."

Horrible fears set Jeanne's brain whirling. In impotent rage, she panted, "Who are you?"

"A Freemason!" The voice sounded merciless, low and terrifying in her ears. "From this moment you belong to us! We only know of one punishment for resistance—death! So be careful!"

Jeanne breathed more freely. He was using threats, therefore he could not be so certain of his case; and he had mentioned death at once. Well, she did not believe he meant it. "What do you want?" she whispered.

"Does Cagliostro know all about everything you are doing

and have done? Answer honestly! Perhaps we already know the answer."

"No," she said, with a shrug of her shoulders.

"Good! I see that you can occasionally speak the truth! Now listen to what I have to say. You are Cagliostro's mistress. Don't shake your head. We know it. We command you in future to inform him of nothing, not even of this interview. We also command you immediately and blindly to obey our smallest hint. Finally we command you to keep us informed of everything he tells you. Do not stir! There is another of those foul monks coming along. Very well, my child, genuine grief lightens the penance, and helps to combat the sin." The harsh voice knew very well how to mumble rubbish!

Jeanne shuddered. The man impressed her. Under the nose of all these Minim Brothers to be able to slip into the confessional was a devilishly bold achievement!

"And how am I to let you have the information?" She was already half won over. The experience pleased her.

Hot dry fingers touched her hand and pressed a little crucifix in her grasp. "Hide that somewhere. If anybody comes to you one day and shows you a similar cross, you will know that he is my messenger. Be cautious and hold your tongue. And now look up, senora, and behold the proof of our almighty power."

She looked up in astonishment. So he was a Spaniard! The gloomy, gaunt and swarthy face looked threateningly at her. The large fierce eyes flashed darkly. He held a piece of ivory notepaper with a gold edge towards her. A mirthless smile stretched her lips. Struck at her most vulnerable point Jeanne collapsed, helplessly convulsed with terror. It was a letter from Marie Antoinette to the Cardinal. The last letter! She knew it. The merciless voice whispered hoarsely, "Our protection will be your reward!" She heard no more. She felt as if she had been sinking for thousands of years into an abyss of horror, darkness and ice.

A friendly hand touched her arm. It was the Brother who

had admitted her. "How long does Madam wish to remain kneeling? It is the hour of Mass."

A glance at the confessional told her that the Spaniard had gone. Almost paralysed, she followed the Brother into the vestry and knelt exhausted on her soft *prie-Dieu*. As she did so the crucifix which the Spaniard had given her fell to the ground. Hastily she picked it up. It was made of iron and quite worthless. On the body of the Crucified One three incomprehensible letters were engraved.—*L.P.D.*

That day the laboratory stank infernally of coal fumes and all manner of similar devilry. But where had that *figlio d'un cane* Benito gone? He had been absent for twenty-four hours.

Unshaven and furious, Cagliostro stormed through the upper storey of his house. No, to-day he could see nobody, not even if whole regiments of candidates came and begged to be made Freemasons. He could speak to nobody, that was understood! He was consulting the invisible powers above!

He was foaming with rage. The final struggle with Baudard and his Lodges had reached its climax and yet his master stroke, which was to draw the eyes of all France upon his Egyptian Lodges had not been accomplished. It all depended on one detail, a tiny, round, neat little detail. And since that confounded Jeanne had succeeded in achieving it, he, the arch-magician of Europe could not possibly fail. Nevertheless it would not come off! What in the devil's name had gone wrong this time?

Oh that Jeanne! Fierce Sicilian curses foamed and frothed at his lips. She had already been gone a fortnight, and Cagliostro's blood was shrieking the wildest dithyrambs of unchained lust. She was the first woman who had kindled his boundless sensuality, hitherto held in check by his ambition, into flame. Now that she was away her white skin shone before his eyes day and night, and he wallowed in lustful memories. No, he could not endure it any longer; he must have her! What the deuce was she up to in that provincial hole? What

did the tawdry splendour of Bar-sur-Aube mean to her? Ridiculous! A woman like her belonged to Paris. His resolution ripened. He must fetch her, even if he had to use violence.

He sniffed. The air smelt of coal fumes and sulphur. With a grim smile, it occurred to him that Hell must smell like that, that same Hell into which he, Jeanne and Rohan would be hurled if he did not succeed in winning all along the line. But he needed Jeanne for this. He cared little about the 1st of August, the day when the first instalment had to be paid. For what terrible fate could overtake Rohan? In the first place, the Prince had wealthy relatives, the Lorraines, the Soubises, the Rohans; and secondly, Cagliostro himself was there, who in the meantime would have become Primate of the Freemasons and absolute master of all their funds. And this would give him a stronger hold than ever over Rohan. Why in the devil's name should not the Freemasons fork out this sum? Even if it only amounted to the equivalent of the diamonds, would it not constitute a dowry for Jeanne? Again everything depended upon Jeanne. The magic circle always returned to her. He pulled his dressing gown closer about him. She must return to Paris. His face assumed a grim and resolute expression. Lorenza? Pooh! A detail! He now looked really happy. What was the good of the inaccessible convents in the Sabine hills?

The door of the bedroom creaked; Cagliostro turned angrily round. It was Benito who, with his arms crossed on his breast and an air of deep humility, was advancing towards him.

A volley of roaring abuse met him. With amused submission, Benito dropped his head and merely lisped, "We have got her."

The Master immediately calmed down and advancing heavily towards him, peered enquiringly into his eyes, "Are you lying?"

"She is waiting in monsieur's boudoir."

A friendly smack of gratitude conveyed to the boy that he was to shave and dress his master, and ten minutes later, clad in gold velvet and silk, Cagliostro stepped with inimitable majesty into the beautiful little pale pink boudoir, the object

of which was only too plainly revealed by the decorations consisting of pastels by Greuze and Boucher, in which pastoral scenes were depicted with a wealth of lascivious detail. The majestic leaden eyes were riveted in close scrutiny on the young woman.

Corpo di bacco, she was certainly the most delightful little bedroom puss that France had ever produced in one of her impish moods! And Rohan had allowed himself to be deceived by that! Incredible! And yet not incredible! The longer Cagliostro looked at her, the greater recognition did his expression reveal. She was like the Queen, though all her features were soften and sweeter. She might have been a more attractive miniature edition of the crowned shepherdess of Versailles and the Trianon. She was a priceless discovery!

The poor little girl shrank back further and further from the hard piercing eyes. The silence seemed to be choking her and now the terrible fat man was actually coming up to her. Utterly bewildered, she lowered her sweet blue and oh! so empty eyes.

"You are Nicole Legaye, whom Madame de la Motte calls Baroness Oliva."

She nodded shyly. She was on the point of bursting into tears.

Completely at his ease, he fondled her shoulders. "You are very beautiful. Why don't you show yourself at the Palais Royal any longer?"

Not daring to look up and blushing deeply, she murmured, "My friend is so jealous." Cagliostro was obliged to laugh. "On that night in August, how did the Cardinal please you?" Losing her composure, she looked up terrified, "Nobody must know that." Cagliostro gave her a friendly chuck under the chin. "You see, I know all about it. I hope Madame de la Motte at least paid you well for it." His look had grown hard again.

"Oh, she is so miserly and wicked!" And the little girl burst into tears.

"Excellent! I will be more generous if you do as I tell

you." She blushed once more, but recovering herself at once gave him a coy look. "But not before this afternoon. I must go home at once now, dear sir. Otherwise Beausire will kick up a terrible row. Oh he can be dreadful!"

Cagliostro laughed until the perspiration poured down his face. "No, I did not mean it in that way, my pretty child. I want you for more important things than that. Keep yourself always at my disposal and hold your tongue, especially with that skinflint of a Madame de la Motte. And now take this to spend on yourself." And he handed her a bank note of over 1,000 francs.

She obviously did not understand what it was all about, but stared spellbound at the note, and stammered, "If the gentleman wishes it, I could of course at once. . . ." And she began to unfasten her ruffle. Cagliostro snorted, "Priceless! But you still do not understand me, my dear. I did not ask you to come here for that purpose. Now swear that you will keep this secret from everybody, particularly if Madame de la Motte should perhaps. . . ."

With trembling lips, she swore the horrible oath which he made her repeat. Her eyes were still glued spellbound on the note. "And does this really belong to me?"

"You can get much more than that," roared Cagliostro, "and a real rich husband into the bargain."

Her eyes beamed. "The gentleman is too kind, if I may say so." And she quickly thrust the bank note into her bosom.

She left. The Master looked slyly after her. She was the kind of instrument which the great god of Sicily only gave a man once in a lifetime. What an excellent fellow that Benito was to have succeeded in unearthing her through the description given him by his friend Rosalie, who was an excellent girl too! And how wonderful was Jeanne to see at a glance the capital to be made out of that sweet little doll. But now Jeanne was entirely in his hands. Now she was his!

Full to overflowing with fresh schemes, and bursting with admiration for Jeanne's genius, Cagliostro ordered his travelling

chaise. Whither? Oh, well, that could soon be settled. The Countess was not to expect him back at least for a week.

Grooms in gorgeous livery rode ahead, and behind them came a pearl grey Berlin upholstered in white cloth on which Jeanne's arms were emblazoned—argent, on a bend azure three lilies or—drawn by four English bob-tailed mares. Both the mares and the carriage hailed from England, and beneath the arms stood Jeanne's royal motto—*Rege ab avo sanguinem nomen et lilia*. Lackeys followed and on the footboard stood the *non plus ultra* of Jeanne's imagination—a real live negro blazing from head to foot in silver. The eyes of all Bar-sur-Aube bulged with amazement.

On the right sat Jeanne, on the left sat Nicolas—both of them glittering with diamonds. Had anyone ever seen so many rings, chains, bracelets and spangles gleaming together? The pasty faced Count wore a coat and breeches of scarlet velvet embroidered with Lyons silk and gold spangles, the buttons of which were of chased gold, and on his satin waistcoat he sported four thick gold watch-chains. Jeanne was dressed in white satin trimmed with lace and garlands of black velvet. The ornament in her hair was a gigantic yellow topaz, which showed up the copper glory of her auburn locks. Her finely chiselled experienced mouth was blood red.

Thus, the cynosure of all eyes, amid shouts and acclamations, the blood of the Valois once more made its entrance into Bar-sur-Aube.

In the two and a half months which he had spent in London, Nicolas had done extraordinarily good business. It is true that when he first made his appearance, with his hands full of the most priceless diamonds, he had aroused considerable alarm in the breasts of the cautious jewellers of Bond Street and Piccadilly, and they had gone with all speed to the French Embassy to make confidential enquiries of the officials as to whether they had heard of any great theft of diamonds. But

how could they have heard of what only a silent mirror in the Rue Neuve St. Gilles was aware?

So Messrs. Grey and Jefferies, bought diamonds worth three quarters of a million for a quarter of a million francs, and laughed up their sleeves. The Count left sixty thousand francs worth of stones with them to be made into jewellery, and they were only too pleased to give him an introduction to a business friend with whom he exchanged two hundred thousand francs worth of diamonds for various articles. He purchased innumerable watches, chains, buckles, snuff-boxes, necklaces, earrings, rings, fastenings and pins, as well as razors, fire screens, glass, steel swords, toothpicks, asparagus servers, pocket books, and sets of carving knives and forks. The Count, who always seemed to be in a hurry, also filled innumerable trunks with personal linen and expensive clothes.

Meanwhile Jeanne had spread the welcome rumour that Monsieur le Comte would shortly return from London a rich man, as he had enjoyed extraordinary luck at the English national sport of betting. She for her part, with much more intelligence and profit than the foolish Nicolas, had put two hundred thousand francs worth of diamonds into circulation, and, with the proceeds, had not only paid all their debts, but had also been able to make countless extravagant purchases. Moreover, she still possessed stones to the value of at least two hundred thousand francs. "Not to mention the twenty-five thousand louis that Rohan has subscribed," said Rétaux scoffingly, as they were making a note of their winnings on paper. And she was obliged to laugh brightly and sweetly.

Carriages, furniture, carpets, bronzes, statues, servants in gold lace, fine horses—the cornucopia of heaven seemed to have been emptied upon the Rue Neuve Saint Gilles soon after the departure of His Eminence. There was an almost too regal bed, with a canopy of scarlet velvet with gold fringes and tassels. There was a beautiful artistic bird which sang and beat its wings when it was wound up, which she had christened Alessandro, although they only called it by this name in fun

when they were alone. But the thing that Jeanne loved most of all was her light cabriolet, with its spherical body, more than nine feet high. It was just such a cabriolet as this that had always stung her envious eyes when as a shivering half-starved child she had had to sit day by day on the great highway leading from Paris through Passy to Versailles. In those days Jeanne had eagerly dreamt that one day she would sit beautiful and heartless in a feudal equipage like this, and as she rolled by look down haughtily on the frightened little beggar girls who all the world over haunt the highways and stretch out their frozen blue hands for alms. And now she had realised her dream.

Immediately after her adventure in the confessional her husband had returned from the misty battlefield of his traffic in diamonds. On that very day forty-two heavily-laden carts had set out for the charming country house which Jeanne had bought in the parish of Saint Macloux near Bar-sur-Aube, and a few days afterwards the noble couple made their triumphal entry.

The whole of Bar-sur-Aube and the surrounding districts were given a feast. They drank from Venetian glasses and ate from silver plates. Never had such a display been seen. Jeanne behaved like a Queen who had been accustomed to this life from time immemorial and expected to enjoy it to the end of her days. Meanwhile never a thought did she give to the 1st of August.

The time went by in feasting, merrymaking and improving the estate. July was fine, hot and cloudless. Merrily the fascinating wasp buzzed round the garden of the earthly paradise she had built for herself, and only the restless look in her lovely blue eyes revealed the fact that, behind the scenes, forces, whose origin and aims were hidden from the world, were busily at work.

One afternoon she was sitting still and silent in her library. The cool green shade of the elms in front of the window cast a warm and friendly glow on the golden brown of the carpet.

Patches of sunshine played at her feet as she reclined in her luxurious armchair. Her eyes were resting thoughtfully on the great rosewood bookcase with its open fretwork, the shelves of which were hidden by green hangings. Upon it stood the busts of Voltaire and Rousseau, and with a charming sneer, Jeanne thought how horrified Rohan would be if he were to see them. Where the curtains were drawn back an extraordinary array of books met the eye—nine quarto volumes bound in morocco richly embossed in gold of Father Anselm's *Histoire Généalogique et Chronologique de France* bore witness to Jeanne's historical interests, whilst on the little octagonal ebony table beside her there lay, bound in blue leather, the *Almanach Royal* of the year 1781, the year when she made her first momentous appearance in the great world on the highway between Strassburg and Saverne. Twenty-seven volumes of the *Famous Men of France* showed her burning interest in the lives of heroes. There was also *Cook's Journey Round the World*, bound in dark red morocco, whilst geography was further represented by a gigantic work in six volumes on the southern hemisphere, together with an atlas of the world. A keen and daring spirit seemed, as it were, to be seeking for fresh outlets, the conquest of new horizons, new kingdoms, new constellations.

Rousseau, Crébillon, Racine and Boileau looked down complacently from the upper shelf, while close by stood such edifying works as *Commentaires réfléchis de l'amour de Dieu*, or *Reflections on the Miserere*. Between these two dignified vellum-bound books there smiled (covertly it is true) two little books bound in brown goatskin containing the sonnets of Aretino and the amazing and instructive engravings of Giulio Romano. But enough! The tactless examination of a library is tantamount to wishing to read in the soul of its owner what she is not.

An English-French, French-English dictionary showed how thoroughly practical her interests were.

Suddenly Rosalie glided into the room. Her wide open eyes betokened alarm and she could hardly speak for excitement.

Jeanne looked up at her. For a moment she felt as if an ice-cold finger were touching her heart.

"What is it?" Her voice sounded short and glassy.

"The Count. . . ." Rosalie stammered and looked anxiously behind her.

"What Count?" Jeanne was already able to smile again, as it were from behind a thin veil. "What Count? Can't you speak?"

"Count Cagliostro," murmured Rosalie.

Jeanne fell back pale to the lips. It was surely not the 1st of August yet? There was a white ring about her pale dry lips. "Ask him to come in."

His breath already filled the room. He was snorting violently as usual. His sad leaden eyes looked in stern silence from one thing to another. Finally he turned their gimlet gaze upon the flickering blue of Jeanne's eyes.

"*Bonjour Madame!* I have come to settle my account with you."

There was a rumble of suppressed excitement in his voice. The room had grown darker. A poisonous green mist seemed to be rising from the ground. Jeanne felt as if she were going to faint. And so it was . . . and so it was the 1st of August after all! She closed her eyes. Cagliostro's voice was now quite close to her. Any attempt at flight was futile. "I have come to ask whether you will be my wife?"

The afternoon sky was just as cloudless as it had been a moment before, when she shyly opened her eyes again. From his dark burning and almost anxious gaze, she saw that he had spoken in earnest. He had said nothing more—he had asked her whether she would be his wife! A faint feeling of nausea overwhelmed her. What did he mean? In faint glassy tones, like those of an astonished child, she asked:

"But what about Lorenza?"

He answered with a cruel wink of his left eye. "Let us get to business. You have no time for subterfuge. You must make up your mind at once."

Still faintly nauseated, she looked in front of her. "Monsieur de la Motte will kill me."

He sat down. The stool creaked beneath his weight. "Did I ask you about that? Keep to the point!"

With a furtive sidelong glance she tried to scrutinize his features, but the impenetrable ferocity of his face told her nothing to-day. She began to feel angry. It is true she had been his mistress—and indeed, there had been reasons at the time why she could not refuse to surrender herself to him. But now, this obscure upstart wanted her to the very last tittle—her name, her thoughts, her plans, her whole life—her, a Valois! Was this fat little man with his peculiar savage and far from genteel odour anything more than a passing whim on the part of the fashionable world? It was out of the question for her to be guilty of such a *mésalliance*. She looked up with sudden resolution. "I . . ."

A strange look of cold rage in his deep-set eyes made her stop. "Well, go on!" The command sounded like a threat.

Her eyes fell on the *Almanach Royal*. Five years ago it would have been different. But now she was a Valois, and moreover, Countess de la Motte and immensely wealthy. No, it would be madness! She really could not bear the subject; it savoured of indecency. She got up suddenly and sat down close beside him. Laying her hands with a light but cold caress on his shoulder, she said sweetly, "I cannot be your wife, Count Cagliostro. I do not want to!" The last three words rang clear and deliberate in the bright room with its green shadows.

She tried to read in his eyes the impression her words had made.

He said nothing, but stared in front of him like an insulted schoolboy. His lips moved slowly as if, in the inmost depths of his being he were chewing heavy curses.

After a moment's silence he passed his hand through his coarse hair and looking angrily at her, replied almost with a growl, "So you do not want to? You do not seem to be aware of what a position in the world you are refusing. Stop! no

mocking grimaces! I suppose you think I am only Count Cagliostro, about whom nobody knows anything, where he comes from, or who he really is. Well, I am more than that even to-day, and, if I choose, I can be the supreme head of all the Freemasons in the world to-morrow." And he looked proudly at her.

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently. "Pooh, these everlasting Freemasons! They are only a club for drawing-room magic or for terrifying children. Stop all this tomfoolery!"

"You are either very stupid, Madam," he replied with blunt emphasis, "or very ignorant. Have you any idea of the huge sums of money which the leaders of the Order have at their disposal?" She gave a careless laugh. "Don't be so bombastic, sir. You won't make any great impression on me with a few hundred thousand francs."

At this he rose and stepped toward her, while she instinctively recoiled. With great calm and dignity and without touching her, he said, "What would you say to an income of two million pounds a year?"

The blood of the Valois, the title of nobility, the Queen's necklace, everything suddenly collapsed and two pallid lips stammered, "Two million pounds? . . . You must be joking, Count!"

He gazed with boyish swagger into the air. "I am telling you a great secret now. If I choose, two million pounds a year will be at my disposal, and in addition to that, a capital twenty times as large." Cautious and breathless came the answer. "And why don't you choose?"

"I am playing my own game. In the ordinary course of events I should have to account to Monsieur de St. James for every penny of the money. But I want to have an unrestricted right over it; and I am on the road to getting it. Besides, in this case it is not only a question of money, but a question of power—the greatest power to be obtained on earth—and I shall obtain it." He walked over to the window and looked thoughtfully out of it.

Spellbound, Jeanne followed him with her eyes. Only a man who was telling the truth could speak like that! Keen to detect any false note or departure from truth, which is always expressed in the voice, she recognised that the two million pounds must actually be a fact. For the moment she was ready to ignore the vague question of power. Two million pounds a year! That certainly made a great difference to the picture. With two million pounds his pungent smell might be endowed with lasting charm, even in the highest aristocratic circles. The whole necklace had not brought in three-quarters of a million francs, and now they were discussing not francs but pounds. That was money indeed! There was nothing to be said against that! But. . . might it not perhaps be possible to grope one's way to these two million pounds without Cagliostro? He had already let the cat out of the bag. Monsieur de St. James—that might be a valuable signpost. She could not help thinking of that mysterious man in the confessional. Surely that must have been Monsieur de St. James? So was it not possible that she might, in the end, even without Cagliostro? . . . She could not help smiling to herself. The fanatical Spaniard had pleased her, and for two million pounds the blood of the Valois would do anything. Perhaps it would be better, at all events for the present, not to say "Yes." Perhaps he would let out further secrets.

"And what if, in spite of all this, I still do not want to, Count Cagliostro?"

With a fierce jerk he turned upon her. "*Santo porco*, then I can compel you, you whore!" He was terrible to behold. His veins stood out purple, his brutal face was black with uncontrollable rage. Jeanne again felt slightly nauseated. She thought of the smooth fair hair of her beloved Rétaux, and decided that a Valois could not have her pleasures prescribed for her.

"If you shout like that, I shall have to ask you to leave my house."

"Only after you have paid."

Her feet went cold with horror. So he knew. . . . Nevertheless her sweet red mouth smiled, "You are mistaken. I have nothing to pay."

Such colossal impudence disarmed his rage. In a trice he had recovered his fierce cheerfulness and sitting down and crossing his legs, he looked kindly at her. He even nodded with that curious twist of the mouth which seemed to show that he was moved. "You have no idea how delightful you are, my child!" His eyes wandered insolently over her. "You have grown a little fatter."

All she could gather was that he apparently still had something up his sleeve. Or was he merely trying to beat about the bush? He was capable of anything. In spite of her bodily repulsion for him he pleased her quite well for the moment. With inimitable grace she took a seat opposite him, and in case of accident she smiled and made eyes at him. "Alexandre. . . ." she murmured.

He gave a grunt of satisfaction. "You are a temperamental child. I like you. Tell me, is it true that on that night in August the Cardinal really saw the Queen in the Bosquet de Venus?"

Jeanne was within a hair's breadth of turning pale. How the devil did he know? That was the one thing that nobody must ever know. Was he really a seer? Her brow was covered with cold sweat. Gracefully she used her silk handkerchief. "These midges are a terrible nuisance. The Cardinal and the Queen? I have not heard anything about it."

With friendly persistence, he continued. "Yes, and dressed as a shepherdess, just as Madame Vigée-Lebrun painted her."

She shook her head thoughtfully. "I know nothing at all about it."

He laughed aloud. "It was either Marie Antoinette or. . . ."

She could not endure it a moment longer. She sprang up, "Or?"

He grinned good-naturedly at her. "Or a wonderful piece of improvisation, a spook, a vision, a phantasy, how do I

know. . . ? In any case, it was a stroke of genius which I cannot find it in me not to applaud." He observed her narrowly from beneath half-closed lids.

She laughed sweetly, although she was on the point of collapsing, for a deadly attack seemed to lurk here—that is to say if he really knew something and was not only putting two and two together in his clever way. Her voice sounded very calm. "But the Cardinal is surely your friend. Why do you not ask him?"

He literally snorted with delight. "I always appeal to the right quarter. It is one of my silly habits." And getting up, he adjusted his jabot and with great satisfaction allowed his round fat hands to glide over his comfortable belly. "By the bye, dear lady, if you don't like the idea of the Freemasons—well, I would listen to reason. In that case I would take the portfolio of Finance Minister of France."

Jeanne paid no heed to his last words. They smacked infernally of black magic. With studied calm, she stared into her lap and said shyly, as she prepared herself for a deadly counter-attack. "Oh, great magician, now I know. You have surely consulted the innocent spirit of your Dove, my young niece. But I am afraid there is not much innocence about the child, for her magic visions no longer reveal the truth. Who could have robbed the poor child, who is under age, of her innocence? I am inconsolable! Is not deportation the punishment for that?"

Cagliostro's eyes bulged with delight. No, he had nothing to fear from this counter-attack. He remembered an exceedingly entertaining pastoral scene between the Dove and her uncle Nicolas; and what about the Marquis de Launay? He was not altogether unconnected with it either.

He eyed her suspiciously. She had too much up her sleeve against him, and a voice seemed to whisper that it had perhaps been a mistake to allow Madame de la Motte to know so much about his affairs. She was certainly devilishly attractive, but . . . had he not always been strongest when he

stood alone? And now, *corpo di bacco*, now *santo porco*! he had got himself caught in a skirt, and an infernally giddy skirt to boot. Suddenly he looked at her angrily. "So you do not want to, Countess de la Motte? I will give you until the 31st of July to decide whether you will be Countess Cagliostro, or whether you would prefer to go to the Bastille, do you understand?"

Once more he was overcome with rage and thirst for vengeance. No woman had ever played with him as this woman was doing—him, the good Giuseppe, the most distinguished arch-magician, gold-maker and thaumaturgist of Europe! Fancy snubbing him! His face turned purple, and hate gleamed from his eyes. Truth to tell, at that moment he could have strangled her.

"Don't laugh, you silly goose. I shall get the better of you yet. And take this and this, on account!" And raising his arm, he boxed her right and left on the ears, and crashed out of the house.

But Jeanne only laughed. She burst into fits of laughter and swayed from side to side till she dropped into the arm-chair she had occupied when Cagliostro entered. The Sicilian's brutality had done the sinful and corrupt blood of the Valois good, but what had benefited her even more was the fact that he had shown his cards.

"You seven times God-forsaken fool! Fancy a Valois marrying a bastard Jew! Fancy your thinking of such a thing! But wait a bit! She will snatch the millions from under your nose and snap her fingers at your threats. Nicole Leagaye must be bundled out of the world. Let us be up and off to Monsieur de St. James!"

Two hours later, dressed in men's clothes and accompanied by her groom, she was riding through the darkness of the night along the road to Paris. The horses were foaming. The way was long. But the great cloak of dark cloth over her nankin coat and breeches suited her admirably. She looked like a handsome youth.

Night had already fallen when, in spite of his long start, she overtook Cagliostro's travelling chaise. He did not see her but he knew she was on his heels, and he laughed grimly to himself. Boxing her ears was a wonderful experience, just as fine as embracing her. And he made up his mind to repeat the experiment. To Nicole Legaye he gave not a thought.

For a second time there was a knock at Lorenza's door. "Strict orders from the Master that in his absence the Signora should open the Lodge and hold a seance!" Darkly her soft voice answered, "They can get on without me. Present my compliments to the ladies and say that I am prevented from coming."

"The master will be very angry!"

Lorenza opened the door. She had a wet cloth about her head, and there were dark circles round her eyes. She looked at him calmly and Benito shrank back. "You can see that I am not well!" And she shut the door.

Benito spat. "It really is dreadful with these women!" Then making a grimace and clicking his tongue loudly to signify his contempt, he sprang lightly away, three steps at a time, upstairs.

The house was still as death. Even the noises in the street seemed to have died down. The dark beating of the wings of solicitude oppressed Lorenza, and she listened, as if seeking for help, as the catch of the door closed behind Benito. Then she removed the cloth from her brow and lighted the candles, although it was hardly dark, and drew the heavy curtains. The room now looked more gloomy and oppressive than ever. Dark tall-backed wooden chairs stood against the almost black panelling of the walls. A large long oak table covered with papers and books, a dimly shining astrolabe, and a remarkable old hour-glass on a high copper pedestal gave the room an appearance of solemn austerity. No Masonic emblems were to be seen, but in the background stood an old-fashioned *prie-Dieu* over which hung a large ebony crucifix.

Lorenza folded her pale hands in despair. She was so terribly alone! Oh, if only she still had her sweet little Padrone to keep her company! He had passed away so quietly and peacefully, as only a loving creature can die. His little body was lying on bright autumn leaves in the earth of a hill near Bordeaux. She had put him there on a mild August morning. Later it had rained, but towards evening a bright rainbow had spanned the gleaming earth, and suddenly she had found comfort in the thought that the soul of her pure and faithful little comrade had crossed that shimmering bridge to the infinite heaven above to take the place there he so well deserved. Her hands could almost feel his loving little silky body, whose warm presence had always given her comfort and love in her incomprehensible, purposeless and unaccountable life. Now everything about her seemed empty. With the passing of the years, heaven seemed to have become ever more inaccessible. How would she ever be able to find her little friend there?

Alas, she had long ago had more than enough of his senseless Freemasonry and of the foolish vain gossiping women and all the rest of them, who, after all, were merely Giuseppe's puppets. There was no one on earth who took an interest in her, or who had compassion on her soul. The learned Abbé Georgel had, it is true, tried to take her heart, which was in such deep need, into his hands. But his hands had been too cold for the Roman girl, and he had talked at such great length to her heart, when it was badly in need of comfort, using words that were all too clear and wise, that at last he had almost broken it. And then in a cold and gloomy church he had handed her over to a stern monk to make her confession, and the latter had sent her away from the confessional without having given her absolution because she was a Freemason.

Pale and aloof the Saviour looked down from His cross and His wounds glowed red. Helplessly she raised her tear-stained face towards the Crucified One. "Take me to Thee, Oh take me to Thee!" It was no longer a prayer, it was a cry, a wordless appeal. She wrung her little hands and suddenly it seemed as if

a strange light were shining from the dark wood and piercing her bleeding heart, as if a warmer and more vital pulse, better used to the ways of love, were beating in her veins. Was she really so much alone? Had she not still got a mission on earth? Was not her lonely husband's immortal soul in great danger? Had not God joined her to him through all eternity? Should she not make every effort to save him? And, after all, were not pride, coldness and aversion the sins for which she was now called upon to repent so bitterly? She did not know, and yet perhaps she knew all too well. For wherever such a question is unconsciously framed is not a desire for a task seeking to find expression? And in this stirring of her immortal soul, surrounded, as she was, by the shimmer of the ebony in the candlelight, did not a strange, dark and fateful answer lie hid?

Her tears had ceased to flow. She crossed herself piously. A simple prayer fell peacefully from her lips. Her consciousness was not aware of the deep shadow into which the bright Lorenza was now descending.

As dawn was breaking Cagliostro, dusty and hungry, arrived in Paris. Benito had not expected him back so soon, and received him somewhat anxiously. "She has kept herself locked up, Master," he whispered in terrified accents, "she has not even gone to the Lodge." He stopped short, frightened, his roguish face wrinkled and contorted, for Cagliostro had flung his precious sword stick angrily to the floor, and was roaring, "Well then, it will all end in a very rude awakening!"

Quivering with rage, he repaired to his wife's room. Now he would have his revenge for her hateful way of ignoring him, and for the infernal jealousy which still tormented him, when she received visitors, or went out alone on her Arab mare and stayed away for hours, or when she went to Mass, or when she allowed herself to be shown the sights of Paris by some faithful swain. Had she not gone with the Marquis de Launay to one of Mesmer's famous magnetic seances? Yes! Now he would have his revenge for everything and not least of all for

the fact that she had never entered into his plans, but had almost always tried to oppose them.

Her sitting-room was empty, and was lighted only by a single flickering candle. Cagliostro's fists drummed on the door of her dressing-room. The smiling tones of her sweet voice bade him come in. The deep blue velvet of her dress under the soft gleaming gold of her locks, the warm shimmer of her shoulders and her neck, her loving woman's face, seemed to send out currents of feminine grace. He drew back slowly before her. Then full of suspicion, he approached her warily and seething with indignation and resentment folded his arms across his breast.

"So you are back, Giuseppe? Was it a long journey?" Her kind words only made him the more suspicious. What did she want to get out of him? His scorn was withering, "Yes, signora, a long and not very edifying journey!"

He dropped into a chair and his words cracked like the practised lashes of a whip. "An exceedingly unedifying journey! I asked a very charming woman to be my wife, but she, the devil take the damned hussy, blankly refused." He longed to see this beautiful woman, who although she belonged to him he had never been able to subdue, drowned in a flood of angry tears. But he was wrong in his calculations. Lorenza's soft hand was passed with motherly amusement over his unruly locks. "Have we got as far as that, my boy?" And full of friendliness, she came and sat beside him.

He gazed at her in astonishment. Did this woman come from the devil? He had now lived with her for fifteen years, and still he did not know her. Full of bitterness he pulled a grimace, and imitating her tone of voice, said: "Yes, granny dear, we have gone as far as that! I have asked Madame de la Motte, who, you know, has long been my mistress, to be my wife. And she kicked me out of the house." He looked up at her with fierce defiant eyes. But all she did was to raise her fine dark eyebrows slightly and answer over her shoulder with

a little smile, "Well, perhaps it is for the best. I don't think you would ever have been happy with her."

"Have been happy with her?" Now at last his wrath poured out in a mighty roar. "Have I been happy with you, you Roman goose? You have not only deceived me, but you have also robbed me of my success, you miserable doll! Instead of having a brain and blood, you are stuffed with straw and oakum. What do you do for the ill-gotten money you cost me?" Anger raised his voice to such a pitch that he spoke in another key and his limbs twitched with fury. Throwing her head back, she looked at him with a strange smile. "Would we not do better to let all those foolish old things rest, Giuseppe? You must be hungry. Go upstairs, change your clothes and then let us go and have something to eat somewhere." So saying she laid a hand on his shoulder.

Cagliostro had ceased to understand. It was strangely provoking to breathe the same atmosphere as this woman. Full of suspicion, he growled, "What is the purpose of this play-acting?" And although it cost him an effort, he succeeded in rising and thrusting her away. "I have not the slightest intention of going out to dine with you."

Now she smiled lovingly at him, quite at her ease, and with a flush that could hardly be seen, shrugged her shoulders. "Why quarrel about it?" With a resolute gesture he left the room.

A few minutes later, when Benito by mistake handed his master the coat with the insignia of Egyptian Grand Master upon it, he received a box on the ears such as had never yet fallen to his lot, a box on the ears of classical proportions, which he would never forget; and he resolved, there and then, that if ever he rose to position of honour and dignity, he would dispense boxes on the ears in this grand style alone.

Soon afterwards Cagliostro and Lorenza were rattling over the uneven pavement of the Boulevard St. Antoine and passed the Bastille on their way to the Palais Royal. For the Sicilian had made up his mind that since he was going to sup with her, he would humiliate her by taking her to the place which was

the favourite resort of all the fast women and baggages of the town.

Already they could hear the moan of the clarionets and the twanging of the mandolins in the distance. The porter bowed low before his lordship, and led them to a small cheaply furnished room with red plush hangings and shabby gold moulding. With insolent familiarity he threw open a baize covered door, behind which could be seen a double bed ready for the night with the coverlet thrown back. Cagliostro grinned at the sight and Lorenza gazed calmly at him. Angrily he ordered a somewhat scanty supper. The waiter looked in astonishment from him to Lorenza, and shrugging his shoulders went about his business.

"I feel at home here," he observed after a while, smacking his lips, and emptying a glass of rum. Faint echoes of distant clarionets reached the sordid room. She gave him a friendly nod, "That will all be different some day, Giuseppe." He turned round and almost bit her nose off. "Nothing will be different. I feel very happy here. In this very room I have often supped with pretty jolly girls, and afterwards, by Jove," and he winked towards the open baize covered door, "it was always most entertaining."

She looked calmly at him. "Now you are exaggerating, Giuseppe! You have never in your life made much of women."

Cagliostro now looked at her with genuine fear. His expression resembled that of a great schoolboy who has not done his homework and is being admonished by his stern master. "How do you know?" Nonsense, she could not possibly know. But had she after all watched him without his having noticed it? From sheer embarrassment he began to bluster, "I have had innumerable affairs. What about Miss Fry, Baroness Recke, Princess Grzewski, Madame de la Motte, and apart from these, hang it! a man has his little needs. . . ." He laughed uproariously, but could not prevent his voice from sounding hollow. He tried excitedly to see the impression his confessions had made on her sweet eyes.

She nodded thoughtfully. Her expression was kind but incredulous. The good-natured smile still hovered about her beautiful glowing lips. A wild thought suddenly struck him. What if he—for was he not sitting with her in the Palais Royal—what if he began to treat her as the accommodating young ladies of the place expected to be treated? Should he seize her, carry her into the next room and then——! A sort of red wave surged greedily to his brain and he snorted aloud. A hot and unctuous expression entered his eyes. But she only looked at him softly and intently, and he dropped his eyes. *Santo porco*, was she different then? And why not? Why in heaven's name? After all she was only a woman!

But she was different!

He closed his eyes and tried to imagine what she would look like undressed; but he could not complete the picture. Was this owing to the many years that had passed, or was it due to the disturbing effect of other images? In any case, the image his imagination conjured up was not Lorenza. And yet she had lain in his arms!

“You are bad company to-day, Giuseppe! What on earth can you be thinking about?” *Maledetto*, how that enchanting low voice could stir his blood! He opened his eyes irritably and stared at her. “What am I thinking about? Of Madame de la Motte's thighs!” He wondered whether that would hit her. But she calmly looked in front of her. He resolved to stagger her.

“What would you say if those idiots wanted to make me Finance Minister?”

“The Freemasons?”

Her calm incredulity provoked him. “The Freemasons! The devil take the Freemasons! No, the Crown of France!”

She smiled faintly. “That is hard to believe, Giuseppe. The Freemasons are, it seems to me, children and fools. You must certainly find it easy to deal with them! But the Crown of France? Think, Baron Breteuil is a clever man.”

He expectorated and grim mockery turned the expression of

his face into a devilish grimace. "Is it that beau of yours, the Marquis of the Bastille, who teaches you this wisdom? Just you wait a bit! Breteuil and his Bastille together with the young friend of your heart, will soon have more than enough!" Still there was not the slightest change in her expression. He rang the silver bell.

The waiter entered. "Romanée!" his massive lordship roared angrily. The unexpected conversation had irritated him. The waiter bowed. "The lady is waiting."

"Tell her to come in!" he almost panted.

An ogling red haired little thing entered the room and in a moment was sitting on Cagliostro's knee. "You might have shaved," she said reproachfully.

With a beaming expression he looked at Lorenza. "How do you like my little friend?" He fondled the little hussy but his caresses were somewhat too paternal. Calmly Lorenza raised her glass to her mouth. Her apparent indifference vexed him, and he began to stroke the girl's shoulders. "Will you stay here?" he asked her a little too eagerly.

She laughed drily. "Is she really a respectable woman? The shadows under her eyes are a bit too deep for that. No, my dear fatty, she is certainly not a respectable woman. I know what you want, you little pig!"

Lorenza turned pale. She was irresistibly beautiful at that moment and Cagliostro laughed aloud, as he pushed the absurd red-haired puppet out of the room. She struggled and bit him, and he kicked her. Outside she began to storm and rage and became obscene.

He took sharp stock of Lorenza. She seemed to have noticed his expression, for without looking up, she made an inimitably sweet movement with her shoulder. *Santo porco*, how beautiful and dignified she looked, even in these surroundings! A thousand ants of desire fornicated over Cagliostro's body. But controlling himself, he sprang to his feet.

"Do you want to go already?"

He turned round and looked at her in astonishment. Yes,

she had really said it. With a moist shimmer her blue eyes rested on him. Her dear red lips were curved in an expression almost of promise. Hang it all, was this really his own wife? With clumsy harshness and looking darkly at her, he snarled, "You see, it is not much good wanting to sup with me. Whatever your object may have been you must certainly have given it up by now." His words were exaggeratedly scornful, but his eyes, his eyes sought restlessly to read her expression.

"I only wanted to spend an evening alone with my husband for once," she said with a superior smile, like a perfect society lady. His head seemed to swell with blood. *Sapristi!* was he after all such a colossal idiot as to be on the point of falling in love with his own wife? Impossible! Convulsively pulling himself together, he began a desultory conversation in the grand Palermo style. She entered into the spirit of it and as the occasion demanded was either bewitchingly grave or delightfully merry. And, as he rattled on, he constantly caught himself staring at her open-mouthed. *Nom d'un chien*, she was ten times more beautiful than the de la Motte!

In half an hour they left. He was hungry. The food had not been to his taste, and the wine had made him drunk, as he had taken too much Burgundy on an empty stomach. The journey home was torture to him, for in the cramped hackney carriage her round arm touched his, and he had not even the courage to kiss her.

On reaching home he left her where she was and tramped angrily up to his own apartments. Benito was not there. But it was all right. He had to settle the business of the little Baroness Oliva. Thus Cagliostro was obliged to perform his toilet for the night with his own clumsy fingers. Angrily he stamped across his dressing-room, clad only in a night-shirt and dressing-gown. Old memories rose provokingly to his mind and his fierce blood seemed to be burning his veins. And it was this woman that he, the greatest idiot in the world, had tried to bargain away time and again. He groaned. Wild and hideous images loomed before his mind. *Santo porco*,

had he been afflicted with blindness? Had he been guilty of a miscalculation after all? Had his life been nothing more than a false speculation? A little cottage on the shores of the blue Mediterranean, a pleasant vineyard, dear children playing about him in the sand, and she, the most beautiful woman, yes, truly the most beautiful woman in the world, at his side. . . . A deep sigh escaped painfully from his breast. She was so admirably designed for love. . . . He closed his eyes, and breathed convulsively. As if egged on by a terrible fever, he groped his way through the dark house, down the stairs and over to the door which led to his wife. It was locked, and he had not the courage to knock!

With a mighty shrug of his shoulders, he dropped down on the threshold and hid his face in his hot hands. The door was locked, and he had not the courage to knock! He sobbed convulsively and swayed backwards and forwards. If only he could cry! Perhaps she would hear it and have pity. But he could not, and she did not even hear him. And so he writhed in his agony, and tumbling forward at last fell asleep.

When he awoke, it was the middle of the night. Shivering with cold, he stumbled back upstairs, and flung himself bewildered on his bed. He no longer understood himself and as for what Lorenza was aiming at he had not the faintest idea. But it was perhaps better to let things go on as they were. He was still the same old Giuseppe Balsamo, and whatever happened, he would bring his ship to port. He laughed softly to himself. Lorenza was delightful! There was no question about that! And after all she was his legal wife. He could not help smiling—his legal wife! Oh well, he would see what happened. Still smiling, he fell asleep.

Very pale, although the sun of Bar-sur-Aube had tanned her skin, Jeanne lay on her couch in the Rue Neuve St. Gilles, and pondered. She was trying to reconcile the various contradictory communications which had reached her that day through the channel of that shrewd Father Loth.

What the deuce had Cagliostro done with his wife at the Palais Royal the night before? Could they have met little Nicole Legaye there? Nicole had disappeared, and her friend, the guardsman Beausire, had been in the Debtors' Prison since the previous day. Had Cagliostro after all succeeded in getting hold of Nicole so as to force Jeanne to consent to marry him? He was quite capable of it. She smiled ironically. He was capable even of this act of foolishness. Such were the clumsy means whereby he gained his ends. His peasant shrewdness carried him no further, and all the time. . . . If he had only been able to get a little further, if he had only suspected how Nicole might have been used. . . . A cold shudder went down her back. But a minute later she shook off her momentary anxiety by a simple shrug of her shoulders. He would certainly never suspect it. A Cagliostro—and up to her tricks? Nothing could get the better of blood, and her royal blood alone made her a hundred times superior to him.

Involuntarily her thoughts returned to the Queen's necklace. She did not want to think about it, for although she felt quite safe, the recollection of the 1st of August always gave her a little stab, which every time it recurred hurt a little more. She pouted her beautiful lips. Foolish nervousness! Rohan was a gentleman, and in order to avoid compromising the Queen, he would hold his tongue and pay. Or, in order to have a little breathing space and gain time, should she pay the first instalment? She could do so without much difficulty. Then she would have six months of peace and in the interval would be able to stalk the golden millions of the Freemasons. The stern ascetic who had eyed her covertly in the confessional might be made to love her and belong to her. That would certainly not be difficult! But was it really St. James? Father Loth had told her that Monsieur Baudard de St. James was the Treasurer of the Navy, and from Cagliostro, moreover, she had learnt that he was a Freemason. She hoped that the fat little Sicilian gnome had not been able to prejudice the wealthy St. James against her.

Once more she laughed ironically. No, he had certainly not done that! He was too stupid; the ox wanted her to be his wife! It was clear that she would have to call on Baudard de St. James one day. If she was not mistaken, and he was the man who had spoken to her in the confessional, this step would greatly promote her object. She therefore dressed herself and repaired to the Place Vendôme.

Baudard's footman was accustomed to ushering in fashionable veiled ladies who refused to give their names. The room into which he conducted her was like a boudoir. The soft arm-chairs upholstered in red velvet seemed to be waiting for attractive visitors, while dissolute engravings smiled down from the walls. A spinet stood open in the corner inviting the touch of fair fingers, and a luxurious couch lay dreaming of gallant idylls. The whole atmosphere was familiar to Jeanne, and she took care to change the knowing smile on her large mouth into an expression of stern impenetrability. Her bright eyes looked bashfully at the carpet, and she kept her arms crossed on her breast, a position which she regarded as particularly dignified.

Baudard approached his visitor with the assurance of an experienced man of the world. "I am delighted to see you, Madam!" And he bowed and sat down opposite her. "May I have the honour of asking whom I have the pleasure of seeing before me?"

It was only now that she looked up and almost turned pale. No, it was not he! That round jovial face could never, even with all the cosmetics and appliances in the world, have transformed itself into the gloomy angular hardness of the sham Father Confessor. She was disappointed, but resolved nevertheless to test him. A haughty expression curled the corners of her mouth, as she looked straight in his face and said, "I am the Countess de la Motte Valois!"

Baudard bowed courteously. "And how can I be of service to your ladyship?"

"You are a Freemason?"

He smiled discreetly. "Quite right, your ladyship, I am an

insignificant member of that great and humane Order, whose object is the welfare of humanity, to be achieved by neighbourly love, religion, public morals and charity. I am surely not mistaken in assuming that your ladyship has taken the trouble to come to me in connection with some good work. Pray be so good as to tell me all about it and I will at once. . . .”

Oh, what a blockhead! If all Freemasons were like him! . . . But no, the Spaniard in the confessional was certainly a chip from a very different block! This fellow Baudard must surely be one of the uninitiated who knew nothing about the dangerous schemes of their leaders. Had not Cagliostro often hinted as much when he had said that the great mass of Freemasons were wholly ingenuous? Nevertheless this kindly bachelor was a valuable acquisition, for, as Father Loth had already told her, he seemed to be immensely wealthy. A fresh plan occurred to her mind. But before giving voice to it, she thought it advisable to beat about the bush a little longer.

“Do you know Cagliostro?” she asked carelessly.

The glance which the podgy well-groomed man gave her was infinitely harmless. “Slightly, slightly. A charming personality! Has he by any chance fallen on evil days? I can hardly imagine it in view of the flourishing condition of his Egyptian Lodges. Have you come on his behalf?”

Jeanne shook her head. It seemed quite clear now that this Baudard was a colossal fool. Her scheme began to acquire further definition in her mind. She answered coldly, “I don’t trust him; I think he is a charlatan. But I wanted to find out—forgive me, I know so little about this Freemason business—whether after all you belonged to his party?”

Waving both hands, Baudard protested against the suggestion. “No, no, Countess; you may rest fully assured about that!”

Jeanne drew herself up proudly. The moment had come for her to carry out her bright new scheme. “I have come to you on a matter of the most confidential nature, monsieur, and

must first of all beg you to assure me of your complete discretion."

The Treasurer of the Navy nodded courteously. "You may take that for granted Madam!"

She paused a moment to increase the tension. "I refer to the question of the Boehmers' necklace," she remarked carelessly.

Baudard nodded kindly but did not seem to be very much interested. Reassured, but still speaking sternly, she continued, "You know that it has been sold?" He nodded. "Do you also know to whom?" He replied innocently enough, "As far as I can remember, to a very exalted member of the state." Jeanne looked significantly at him. "As a matter of fact it was to the Cardinal Prince Rohan." The friendly and appreciative glance with which the Treasurer of the Navy contemplated her was entirely non-committal. "Oh really, really? The Cardinal?"

Jeanne continued emphatically, "But the Cardinal only acted as a cat's paw to get hold of the necklace."

The gravity and importance with which these words were spoken made Baudard smile. He could not help imagining what Jeanne's expression would be if she were told how fully informed he was regarding all these details.

She looked at him peevishly. "You are laughing, Monsieur!"

"Forgive me Countess, but I had to smile, for I was thinking of the Boehmers. Are they not much too cautious to allow themselves to be inveigled into such dubious transactions?"

Jeanne raised her first finger as straight as a candle, and shook her head gravely as Cagliostro did when he wanted a sceptical audience to listen to him. "Do not give way to such ill-considered mirth, sir. The real purchaser is the Queen!" Baudard's expression remained just as impenetrably amused as it had been before. "Then the Boehmers' necklace must have reached the right party, after all?" He let the words slip as if he were not thinking, for he was eagerly observing Jeanne's charming little toes which she allowed to wag to and fro beneath her prim black silk dress.

Her foot returned the impudent look with a livelier wag than ever. Without stopping, she pattered on: "The value of the necklace was estimated at one million six hundred thousand francs, payable in four half-yearly instalments, of which the first will soon fall due." Baudard still seemed to be sunk in contemplation of the charming little foot. What a block-head! thought Jeanne, and in a flash her foot disappeared. "The Queen is at present in straits for money and cannot meet the first instalment of 400,000 francs."

With every sign of genuine respect, he looked at Jeanne, "Oh, I am sorry for that. . . ." Once more her raised finger imposed silence, and speaking as though she were conferring a decoration upon him, she continued, "Her Majesty hopes that Monsieur de St. James will come to her help by advancing the sum."

Baudard lent back serenely in his armchair, stretched out his legs and folded his hands across his portly belly. "Too charming!" he remarked smiling and then he added cordially, "By the bye, Countess, do you know the little story about Madame de Cahouet?"

Jeanne frowned angrily. "No!" The impudent fellow was twiddling his thumbs like Cagliostro and gazing dreamily at her. "Madame de Cahouet was a beautiful and exceedingly gifted lady, really extraordinarily gifted. I regret that you should never have known her. A certain Farmer General of taxes fell in love with her. She was a confidante of the Queen, and through her, the ambitious tax farmer advanced large sums to the eternally poverty-stricken Queen. What will men not do when both love and ambition urge them on, Countess? But when Madame de Cahouet found her way into the Bastille, the poor tax farmer was rudely awakened from his paradisaical dreams and was forced to acknowledge that his good gold pieces would never be transformed into orders, honours, or important posts, as our dear and gifted friend, Madame de Cahouet, had never once in her life set eyes upon the Queen!"

An ominous glint came into Jeanne's eyes. "What am I to

understand by that, monsieur? How could I have come to know about this secret affair except from the lips of Her Majesty herself?" And she took refuge in angry silence.

Baudard seemed to be thoughtfully turning things over in his mind. "It is a strange world! In the first place, I had to provide eight hundred thousand francs for the necklace to be made at all. Now I am asked to give another four hundred thousand francs in order to pay for it. It is really too comical!" And he laughed a friendly gurgling sort of laugh.

Jeanne had known nothing at all about that! What an unpardonable blunder! Why had she not made the most exhaustive enquiries beforehand? But her resourceful mind coming to her rescue, she immediately began to extemporise. In a flash she thought of the feint with which to ward off the attack. "It was precisely because Her Majesty knew all this that she thought Monsieur de St. James might be interested."

The answer pleased Baudard. Now he knew that, if necessary, he would have in Jeanne an excellent instrument for the forthcoming scandal. Nevertheless, he did not wish to confide in a woman who had bathed in every stream, so that, if the worst came to the worst, he could swear he had had nothing to do with the matter. Even for Baudard this was playing a high game.

"'Pon my soul, in the circumstances, I should not be disinclined," he said with a smile. "But I should have to have a written statement from the Queen." He looked eagerly into Jeanne's eyes. A straw would have made her lose her composure.

He wanted something in writing and she knew that he must have seen letters from the Queen! Impossible! "Is it not enough to have Her Majesty's confidence which makes you the honoured participator in this secret?"

Baudard chuckled good-naturedly to himself. "I have known all about the business ever since the 1st of February. No, no, I must have something in writing, in writing. Then Baudard will be prepared to discuss with Madame!"

Very pale Jeanne rose to her feet. "Then the Queen regrets! farewell, monsieur!" With her usual airy footsteps she tripped to the door. Baudard followed her with smiling eyes. When she had reached the door, he called her back. "One moment, Countess! Won't you talk of something else for a moment or two?" She halted and half turned towards him. She had expected as much. "What have you to say to me?"

The Grand Master of the Paris Freemasons bowed courteously and begged her to be seated. He also sat down, but this time with his back to the window so that his face was in shadow. His voice also sounded somewhat shadowed when he once more turned to Jeanne: "Do you not also think, dear Countess, that it would perhaps be better if I dealt direct with the Queen? I have already once or twice before come to the assistance of our gracious sovereign in similar circumstances."

Jeanne's rosy lips were now as red as ever, and even her haughty smile had returned. "Just as you please, monsieur. The Queen will be only too glad to welcome you."

"You need not worry, dearest Countess; the Queen knows that I am her humble devoted servant." He mumbled the words with sweet condescension.

Jeanne's eyes rested dreamily on him. "And what about the two million pounds which the Freemasons extract from the State every year in order to overthrow it?"

Had Cagliostro blabbed? The Treasurer of the Navy folded his two fat little hands. "We are at cross purposes. The two millions are nothing but the vision of a poet, dear lady. But could we not come to some understanding? Why should I have to go to the Queen first in order to find out that she knows nothing at all about the matter of obtaining four hundred thousand francs from me?"

Jeanne felt as if she were crashing through infinite space into a cold dark waste, as if she had been falling for an eternity without reaching the end of her terrible plunge. And yet apparently she was calmly sitting on a chair, and still had strength enough to collect her thoughts. Was she really beaten? Did

he perhaps know that the necklace. . . . Or did he only imagine that, in view of what he knew of the matter, she wanted to make a little money? Yes, it must be so; hence his playful reference to Madame de Cahouet. Cagliostro was obviously to blame for the whole thing. He had warned him about her, that was certain. But he did not know either that she had. . . . She breathed more freely and lisped, "I do not understand you."

"Oh, don't worry about it!" Baudard said with a deprecating laugh. "We shall understand each other soon enough. You see I only look as if I could not count up to three. You jumped to the conclusion that being a man about town I must be just as stupid as Prince Louis, and thought that I would give you the money without asking any questions and without demanding any security. You have made a mistake, my beauty. Nevertheless I will regard the whole thing as not having happened, if you will answer my next question as honestly as you can. What did you want the money for?"

Jeanne had already recovered her tongue. This Baudard was certainly much cleverer than she had thought. Nevertheless, there was no manner of need for things to be as terrible as they had at first appeared, and with a clear cold gaze she looked up. "I wanted to buy back my family estates, and to restore the prosperity of my house. The Cardinal who is my lover, ought to have paid the money to avoid a scandal, but he is not ready to do that."

"Bravo!" The rosy palms of the Treasurer of the Navy came lightly and almost noiselessly together once or twice. "A most excellent scheme! I can hardly believe a word you are saying, fair lady, but that is a private weakness of mine when I am dealing with pretty women, a sort of gallantry. Bravo! Bravo!" And once more he clapped his hands lightly together. "You have great gifts! You ought to be able to go a long way yet. I will keep my eye on you." He was silent for a moment and smiled to himself.

Now he will suggest that I should become his mistress, thought Jeanne.

He seemed to have guessed her thoughts. "Perhaps I ought to turn this piquant situation to account. But for the moment nothing is further from my thoughts, dear lady. We must consider ourselves allies, however, and as soon as I can use you I shall call you. Meanwhile, farewell!" And giving her a polite bow he left the room.

As she passed through the beautiful carved oak door through which an hour previously she had entered the palace of the Grand Master of the French Freemasons, Jeanne did not feel altogether at ease. It is true that she was not threatened with any immediate danger, and she regarded herself as more intelligent than all the Freemasons put together, but she still seemed to lack the advantages which, as a woman, she must possess in order to tread the path at the end of which gleamed two million pounds a year. Aye, for a moment or two she was even doubtful whether she were on the right path at all. It must be he. Behind this Baudard much more lay concealed than he admitted. And then there was also that other fellow, the Spaniard. He too would call upon her one day. Thus she was the fellow conspirator of two Freemason leaders, and she could snap her fingers at Cagliostro. For whatever St. James might say, the two million pounds a year were there, and since they were there, they must, according to the laws of gravity, fall to Jeanne.

This was how matters stood. And it was high time to write to Rohan, both as Countess de la Motte and also on ivory note-paper with a rich gold border as the lady who wore the crown. For this purpose Rétaux must be summoned from Bar-sur-Aube, and also Nicolas, who was clever at scenting out fast young women. For he must find Nicole Legaye even if he had to spend night after night in the Palais Royal.

It had been an extraordinary day, and that night in the gloomy attics of the palace on the Place Vendôme an even

more extraordinary conversation took place. The tiny room with its slanting roof, was only faintly illuminated by one candle, and the round window which looked out onto the Place had been carefully covered, so that no ray of light could be seen from outside. There were no doors visible, only a hidden hole covered by a trap-door, which now stood open and revealed the top of a spiral stair. On a soft luxurious bed which seemed quite out of keeping with the general poverty-stricken aspect of the room, Ximenez was sitting chewing a biscuit which he moistened now and again with Malaga. Opposite him lolled Baudard in a soft armchair upholstered in morocco.

"In spite of everything, I do not quite understand why you so obstinately insist upon it, *senor*," Baudard growled, as he contemplated his polished finger-nails.

The Spaniard gave a short laugh. "Because you are too much in love with your own schemes, Baudard. I tell you that the *de la Motte* will play a much greater part in our arrangements than you imagine to-day. She is a woman who will shrink at nothing."

"Very good! I agree!" And Baudard drew himself up. "But what about Rohan and Cagliostro? Are not the two on friendly terms? You are not reckoning with that. Or do you mean that Cagliostro would not allow his mouth to be closed if it suited his purpose to blab?"

Ximenez regarded him coldly. "That friendship will not last long."

The Grand Master of the Paris Lodges sprang up. "Proofs! Proofs!"

"You will have them." And the Spaniard pressed his lips. "There are many reasons why the *de la Motte* can have no use for such a friendship, and as the pay day draws near will do everything in her power to destroy it in order to cast the blame on Cagliostro. What will you bet me that in the next few days all kinds of ingenious letters and documents will find their way to Saverne?"

Baudard raised a deprecating hand. "He will find it quite easy to clear himself."

"One moment!" scoffed Ximenez. "Of course he will be able to clear himself if he wants to. But what if he loses all interest in the Cardinal? What then?"

"Oh, then, then. . . ." stammered Baudard. But the Spaniard continued in harsh triumphant tones, "I have definite information that Rohan's preliminary memorandum on Cagliostro's Blue Freemasonry has been rejected by the College of Cardinals. Nay, I can tell you something more. I know that Rohan is going to be urged to break off all connection with Cagliostro. Is that not enough for you, Monsieur Baudard?"

The Treasurer of the French Navy was silent for a moment. Then he resumed his seat. His fat form stiffened. "Then it will be high time for us to renew our association with Cagliostro."

"High time indeed!" hissed Ximenez sharply. "Have you read the book?" The Frenchman nodded and pointed to an open quarto volume which lay by the wine bottle. It was entitled, *The Book of the Constitution of the One and Only True and Lawful, Just and Perfect Mother Lodge of the Free and Recognised Egyptian Freemasons of Triumphant Wisdom of Lyons.*

"What do you make of it?" growled the Grand Master of the Illuminati. Baudard shrugged his shoulders. "A dubious hotch-potch brewed from every kind of mysticism, shrewd appeals to the mob, exaggerated humility before an invisible idol, and divine honours paid to his earthly incarnation, the Great Coft—all this richly interlarded with plenty of grandiloquent tub-thumping. To my mind it is bombastic twaddle and not always comprehensible at that."

The Spaniard gave him a dark stern look. "I have already told you often enough, revered Grand Master of the Paris Lodges, that Cagliostro is the right man for us. Brutal, self-reliant, free from scruple and laden with secret energy, he is perhaps the only man capable of leading Freemasonry through

the welter of political confusion and upheaval to its desired goal of ruling the world. What seems to you ridiculous in the book of the constitution will be regarded by the majority of our curiously constituted contemporaries as a sort of revelation. The following facts are a clear proof of this—you are the Grand Master of the seventy-two Paris Lodges, a very considerable number. Nevertheless, you never see more than two or three Brothers at most of the Lodge evenings, for Cagliostro has drawn all the others in his train. All self-respecting Freemasons have gone over to Egyptian Freemasonry, without, however, turning their backs on the great order of Freemasons; because Cagliostro's contention that the Egyptian Lodges are in a way only a mild form of the ordinary Lodges has been accepted. He has proved right. If we do not bring him over to us we are beaten. For pray bear this in mind, that one day he may himself rise to what we are—a Grand Master of Freemasonry."

Baudard smiled. It was an anxious smile. "Do you really think so?"

Ximenez continued more caustically than ever. "The fellow's cunning will be a constant source of danger to us, in which case there is only one thing for us to do, and that is to take flight, headlong flight. And I am at a loss to know whither. For we shall feel safe nowhere, not even in that mysterious quarter of the globe which Senor Cook discovered only a few years ago—if I am not mistaken it is called Australia. And because Cagliostro is a permanent menace to us, he must come over to our side."

Baudard interposed excitedly, "But what if he will not consent? In that case there is no alternative but to get rid of him."

The Spaniard shook his head wearily. "I have thought of that already. But there is perhaps an even better way, and that is to make him harmless. However, as long as I entertain the hope of making him one of us, I will not have recourse to that method. Our grand object, which is to overthrow mon-

archies, to break the rule of Rome, and to unite all the powers of earth in our hands, can best be realised if we keep this mysterious ass with his gigantic will at our head. Only when everything else has failed, shall I use my method, or when. . . .” Ximenez suddenly stopped. Baudard looked at him enquiringly. “What do you mean by that?”

The Spaniard gazed sullenly before him. “I cannot tell you yet, but we shall see,” he growled, mouthing the words as if he were chewing the cud. “In any case, do all in your power to win him over. I will allow you to make any concessions, with the exception of Rome.”

It was the Frenchman’s turn to smile. “Cagliostro has a very beautiful wife.”

The Spaniard gave a surly grunt. “Be careful, my dear sir. In the first place, she is as stupid as they are made; she is very religious and hates Freemasonry, and furthermore—the Sicilian is as jealous as a Turk, although apparently the couple do not get on together.”

“You need have no fear, you need have no fear! Baudard knows how to get on with women! And meanwhile what have we to do about the de la Motte?”

Ximenez pondered a moment. “I approve of your tactics in not having revealed yourself to her as Grand Master. For the time being we do not need her. She will come into the play soon enough when the pay day arrives. The best plan would be to get her over to London in the early days of August, so that they will not be able to say that she fled there beforehand out of fear. Then from London she may make her disclosures.”

“Very good!” Baudard smiled. “Splendidly thought out! From London therefore! And as for myself, I will penitently approach our future primate during the course of the next few days.” He laughed softly. “How he will roar with laughter!” He yawned faintly and held out his hand to Ximenez. “Good-night, senor. By the bye, do you intend to remain in Paris long?”

Ximenez silently shrugged his shoulders, and yawning again, Baudard descended the spiral stair.

In the Rue Saint Claude curious developments appeared to have taken place. Fat little smiling gnomes of bourgeois content seemed calmly to have taken possession of the gloomy house. They were sniffed at with mistrust and indignation by Benito. The most obscene curse appeared too tame for the occasion. Whatever had come over the master? He did nothing but coo *cara mias* and other matrimonial platitudes to the signora all day, and Benito was beginning to ask himself whether it was the first sign of senile decay or the beginning of a new and magnificent programme. He felt he could never forgive the master for side-tracking on to bourgeois lines. For the lively little Neapolitan this would have provided the extremely regrettable occasion for him to give notice at once. He was only waiting for the intimacies between the two to get as far as Madonna Lorenza's bedroom. Then it would soon be proved whether his Excellency had really gone to pieces, or whether an important grand scheme were afoot. For then the final *dénouement* could not be far off.

Meanwhile, Benito's omnipotence as *major domo* had already been seriously curtailed by Lorenza's personal attention to household matters. And this meant a most unwelcome encroachment on his savings. Madonna Lorenza's equally unexpected and undesired interference in domestic concerns also affected this most faithful of all servants in his private capacity. For, although his master was very much fatter than Benito, they happened to be of the same height, so that up to the present the worthy youth had never had to give a thought to his personal linen. As for the suits, which he could not have worn without falling out of them, they had constituted the stock-in-trade of a flourishing private business in clothes which had not always been discarded. And now all this was to stop!

Benito resolved to look on for yet a while longer, after which he really must take action. The worthy Neapolitan's

credit at a certain little bank in Lyons, had already reached quite a decent figure, and he knew perfectly well what he proposed to do with it. He had visions of a jolly tavern in the port of Naples, with innumerable pleasant drinks and pretty complacent girls, who would lighten the labours of the sailors.

But it was also quite conceivable that his master was preparing a great new surprise for them. That wealthy fellow, Baudard St. James was now paying frequent visits to the Rue St. Claude, and would stay until far into the night, when Madonna Lorenza would frequently enliven the conversation between the two men with her company. Benito knew all about the fabulous wealth of the Treasurer of the Navy, and was also fairly well informed regarding his amorous proclivities. Was it possible that the Countessa would enter into his orbit? That would mean heaps and heaps of money and would again be a magnificent idea worthy of his master! In his mind's eye Benito could already see the luxurious appointments of a beautiful private room for captains which he would gain by it.

Cagliostro, who was accustomed to regard the whole world and even his own house as a hotel in which to spend the night comfortably, and perhaps, if it suited him, to celebrate feasts in from time to time, had become a victim of a faintly tormenting sense of uncertainty. A comfortable home, a thoughtful woman's hands, regular meals, a cheerful sparkling fire in the grate, and an atmosphere laden with sweet scents, concealed more dangers for him than all the police and prisons in the world. He did not quite understand what was happening, but he felt that the peace of his home did him good, and he withdrew as much as possible from his business engagements, although, fortunately for him, these engagements did not allow him to do so altogether, and did not withdraw themselves from him.

In the shape of the fat and friendly figure of the Grand Master of the Paris Lodges, they stepped across his threshold and carried the atmosphere of the life of the great city into his bourgeois *mons veneris*.

At first he was not received very kindly. Cagliostro roared a "Well, what now?" at him scornfully and left him standing where he was. Baudard remained calmly waiting, until the bull-dog returned. And, as a matter of fact, he did return. His persistence betrayed to Cagliostro that he wanted something important from him.

And Cagliostro was right! In the name of all the Grand Masters, Baudard de St. James surrendered and proposed an armistice, and the appointment of a council of three under the presidency of Cagliostro, which would be empowered to make final decisions. And, with an appearance of gloomy brooding, Cagliostro promised to think over these wretched proposals. But that was all. From that time forward, however, Baudard came every day and curried favour with the Master, paid court to the beautiful Countess, and like a favoured visitor played the part of a happy child in the household. He brought Lorenza flowers and rare fruit, and for the peevish Master he brought rare wines and precious liqueurs brewed by artistic monks in the south of France. And Cagliostro even allowed the smiling well-groomed Frenchman to discuss Freemasonry.

Lorenza for her part was more than usually calm and cool, and hardly ever did more than give a faint strange smile when Baudard retailed some of the most amusing anecdotes from his large stock. In this too he was a Grand Master, and Cagliostro envied him the virtuosity with which he told his tales. For he himself had a bad memory for points, and always laughed loud enough to make the walls crack before he had really begun his story.

Thus a week went by, and the rosy jovial Treasurer of the Navy had become a familiar spirit in the house in the Rue St. Claude. With the tact and good humour which were peculiar to him, he had set to work and had already almost reached his goal, when the first signs of subterranean thunder began to be heard.

At the express wish of Ximenez, Cagliostro had been told nothing of the interview with Jeanne, for it seemed advisable

that the Grand Master of Egyptian Freemasonry should not be kept too accurately informed. Both men felt satisfied that Jeanne, for her part, would tell him nothing, for they were well aware that recently a sort of tacit hostility had sprung up between the two.

Cagliostro's demands had been accepted almost without modification—the recognition of Egyptian Freemasonry as the Master Lodge, the erection of a fairylike palace which was to belong to him as Primate for life, strict fulfilment of all orders which he should think fit to promulgate, sovereign right of deciding the political policy of the order, and finally—and this was perhaps the most important of all—the unrestricted right to dispose, as he thought fit, of over a third of the yearly income of the Order of Freemasons. He had at first demanded half, but Baudard had convinced him that this would be impossible since the official and unofficial intelligence service of the Freemasons required vast sums of money, particularly at this moment when they were making their supreme effort to strike the great blow which they had long been preparing. The only point that remained at issue was Rome, for Cagliostro obstinately insisted that Freemasonry should be converted into an Order approved by the Pope and should undertake to wage war against the disintegrating spirit of the various Christian schisms and heresies. It is true he limited the last clause more and more as time went on, and seemed ready to make certain concessions with regard to the war to be waged. But Baudard could not dissuade him about Rome; for to Cagliostro Rome had become a fixed idea.

The shrewd Baudard de St. James soon discovered the influence for the sake of which Cagliostro would not allow himself to be moved from his Romish madness, as Ximenez described it. It was a personality represented by loving feminine hands, blue eyes under deep brown brows, a sweet face crowned by heavy golden locks—Lorenza. It was only by this way that she saw any chance of Cagliostro's soul being saved,

and, after all, this was the goal she had set herself in order to win the forgiveness of heaven.

The rancorous Spaniard only had a scornful laugh for all this.

"The Roman woman must be changed for another woman who is more intelligent." Baudard would have been quite content with this, for Lorenza was not to be seduced or conquered, neither could she be outwitted. She was as reserved as she was beautiful, "and possibly as stupid too!" Baudard always added by way of relieving his mind. That is how things stood when the first subterranean thunder was heard.

The dark and cunning Spaniard had been right, a thousand times right! Jeanne was trying to trip Cagliostro up and was setting a trap for him, more particularly as all her investigations in connection with the whereabouts of the little courtesan, Nicole Legaye, whom she had raised to the rank of Baroness Oliva, had proved fruitless. She wanted to keep calm, but could not help feeling alarmed. Moreover, to her great annoyance, her two husbands, as she called them, were not anxious to exchange the comfort and luxury of Bar-sur-Aube for the electric atmosphere of Paris, and thus many precious days were lost. When at last the two men joined her, Jeanne had long ago framed a different plan. Instead of despatching a little missive on ivory notepaper with a rich gold border, she sent a fat scroll to the prince, a confidential scroll, accompanied by documents relating to Cagliostro.

Rohan was deeply shaken. He felt that his confiding nature was not equal to such upheavals, and in addition to his anxiety about the Queen, this fresh disappointment had been prepared for him by his friend. It was not only that the Freemasons had such terrible schemes up their sleeve, but the man in whom he had such unbounded confidence, on whom he had relied so completely, had actually hatched scandalous plots, and had helped the Freemasons to elaborate them. A war against the Lily of the Bourbons, the destruction of the Royal House—

incredible, unthinkable! And what about the secret war against Rome? Had not Cagliostro always urged him in private, him the Prince Cardinal, to give his own vote and secure that of his fellow dignitaries and relatives in the Church for the recognition of Egyptian Freemasonry by their body? Could such hypocrisy be possible? The chivalrous boyish soul of the Cardinal was utterly incapable of grasping such a thought. But its irrefutable proofs lay before him—reports from Lodges, minutes of seances, and lastly two letters which bore Cagliostro's own signature endorsed by his private seal, the serpent with an apple in its mouth. These were incontestable proofs! To this experienced man of the world with the soul of a boy, it never once occurred that dishonourable motives might lie at the root of this exposure, much less did he suspect that the papers might have been forged. He fell a prey to the most bitter broodings, which resulted in the resolution to return to Paris without delay and find out the truth there. This was precisely what Jeanne wanted.

As soon as he arrived at the Maison de Strasbourg, two confidential letters were despatched to the two persons uppermost in his mind, one of them being addressed to a certain auburn-haired Jeanne.

The other letter was conveyed none too willingly by Abbé Georgel to Cagliostro; this confidant of the Prince being chosen as the bearer, because Countess Cagliostro's great admirer, the worthy Swiss Planta of Zuoz, was of opinion that the Cardinal must at least hear what the other side had to say, and had advised that the astute and cool-headed Jesuit should have a preliminary interview.

Abbé Georgel assumed a neutral attitude. It is true that at present his observations had led to no very clear conclusions, but of this he was certain—Cagliostro was playing a double game. The Sicilian was by no means whole-heartedly devoted to the cause of Freemasonry, while on the other hand his idea of placing Egyptian Freemasonry under the supremacy of the Pope seemed to the Jesuit full of craftily laid mines and pit-

falls. Certain words which Lorenza had let fall had led the Abbé to draw his own conclusions, in which his gift for putting two and two together had been of the greatest assistance. For the Roman woman was extraordinarily reserved in all matters relating to her husband. On the other hand, the Abbé had immediately come to the conclusion that Jeanne was a swindler, and his thrifty and sober spirit was in sore distress over the history of the necklace. He had almost exceeded his duty in his effort to dissuade his master from standing surety for it, and at length Rohan had excluded him from all discussions and dealings connected with it and had ceased to confide in him on the subject. The letters which had passed between the prince and Her Majesty certainly seemed to Georgel to provide a certain security, but the Jesuit could not help feeling that an intimate correspondence of the sort between a prince of the Church and his Queen was not altogether proper.

With a heavy heart he repaired to the house of the mysterious count. Cagliostro received him with even greater surliness than usual. He listened absent-mindedly to what he had to say and answered vaguely. Mortified and full of suppressed rage, the Abbé at last handed him the prince's letter. Cagliostro scanned the contents and then proceeded to ramp and rage. "So this is all the thanks I get! A man who thinks of nothing but skirts cannot help falling a prey to every tell-tale-tit! Does Rohan imagine that I should ever condescend to be confronted with Madame de la Motte? It is enough to make one roar with laughter!" And he tore the letter into tiny fragments.

Pale and angry, the Abbé had sprung to his feet. "Your lordship, these remarks. . . ."

"Fiddlesticks!" Cagliostro interposed. "I am not the handsome prelate's jester. Let Rohan find out how happy he can be with his famous Countess! As for me, I withdraw!" And snorting fiercely, he was silent.

Coldly the Jesuit replied, "Does this mean, sir, that you do not intend to refute the charges His Eminence has brought

against you?" The Sicilian surveyed him darkly from head to foot and without answering turned away to leave the room. But at that moment Lorenza entered and he stopped. She did not look at her husband, but gave a friendly nod to the Abbé. "I was in the next room and overheard all you have been saying. I can well understand the Count's displeasure." Her voice was as clear as a bell, and her eyes were proud and steady as she looked at the Jesuit. "My husband discovered all Madame de la Motte's tricks and has exposed them. No wonder she is now doing all she can to injure him. I should have thought His Eminence was too clever to allow himself to be taken in by this intriguing creature. My husband is quite right to be angry; such ingratitude cries aloud to heaven!"

The Jesuit was so astonished at these words that he did not notice how agitated Cagliostro had become. "But, Countess, I do not understand. You speak of ingratitude. I should have thought it was Monsieur de Cagliostro who had every reason to be grateful to the prince."

Lorenza gazed haughtily at him. "You would be nearer the truth if you put it the other way round, your reverence. The fact that Monseigneur owes Count Cagliostro over a hundred thousand francs is proof enough."

The Jesuit scanned the face of the beautiful woman intently. It was not even agitated, but the blue of her eyes shone with unaccustomed depth and brilliance.

He shrugged his shoulders and remarked incredulously, "Over a hundred thousand francs? A large sum!" The expression on her face convinced him that she had spoken the truth. She threw her head back, "Do you wish to see the receipts? I daresay the Count would show them to you." It was the first time that Georgel had noticed any sign of superiority and scorn in her sweet voice.

Cagliostro had long since recovered his composure. The scene pleased him. Dreamily he took a wallet richly embroidered in gold from his pocket. "The Countess is mistaken. I certainly did possess certain I.O.U.'s from the Prince," and

he took out from the wallet certain papers which were undoubtedly in Rohan's handwriting. "But I possess them no longer." With these words, which he pronounced with careless majesty, he tore the papers into shreds and flung them into the fire. "Tell his Eminence that our friendship has been burnt to ashes in those flames." And bowing proudly, he left the room.

The Abbé turned to Lorenza. Her eyes had a frosty gleam as if they were made of blue ice, and he realised that although everything seemed in order and yet not in order, he had played a part quite as foolish and sad as the rest of the actors in a drama the text of which he did not know and the unravelment of which nobody could possibly foresee. And this was the tragic-comic element in the lie concealed in the heart of mankind, the lie born of poverty and pride, and the lie which since the fall of Lucifer, the fairest of the angels, had lulled the weak and bewildered hearts of men more sweetly than the belief in the just and stern God who demands sacrifice.

With a faint inclination of his head, Georgel went silently on his way. Deeply oppressed, he returned home. One thing alone did he understand—that everything that had happened to him and his fellows was the outcome of everlasting laws from which there was no escape.

His account of Cagliostro's behaviour made a deep impression upon the Cardinal. It is true that his doubts were not altogether dispelled, but supported by Georgel and Planta, he was obliged to acknowledge that a man with a guilty conscience did not act with the haughty pride Cagliostro had displayed. He was vexed at having offended his friend, but comforted himself with the hope that in the end Cagliostro would allow himself to be appeased with soft words. But he was mistaken. The Master remained inaccessible and irreconcilable. Neither of the two envoys sent to him returned with the olive branch in his hands. Rohan was so deeply mortified that at last he ceased to make any further attempts with his angry friend, and before

long it seemed as if the gulf between the two would never be bridged.

Meanwhile Rohan had never stood in greater need of the advice of the friend who understood the human heart so well. The 1st of August, the day on which the first four hundred thousand francs had to be paid for the necklace was drawing ever nearer, and the Cardinal was obsessed with increasing anxiety and fear; for things were happening which his unbusinesslike mind had lost all desire to understand. And every night his sleep grew more and more disturbed.

Cagliostro, on the other hand, was pursuing his own game with even greater determination. He wanted to give the Cardinal a lesson, and hoped that by leaving him in suspense, the proud prince of the Church would have before long to give way, and would then do everything that the Sicilian bade him. The money for the first instalment? Pooh! Cagliostro felt that if he were Primate by that time, it would be a simple matter for him to lay that trifling sum at the feet of the prince, and meanwhile it would do the latter no harm to be kept in suspense.

Dressed in the deepest and severest black, Jeanne, on receipt of the prince's letter, had immediately hurried to the Maison de Strasbourg. She had no news, as she had not seen the Queen for a long time. Somewhat dejected, Rohan asked her to deliver to Versailles a letter full of excuses regarding his sudden return. But Jeanne did not seem anxious to undertake the mission. And thus several days went by.

But what was really the matter with the Queen? Madame de la Motte declared that she had delivered the letter, but no reply was forthcoming. Moreover, the Queen had not yet worn the necklace and she had not condescended even indirectly, to let fall a hint to her court jewellers about the matter. But every day as she walked from the King's apartments to morning mass, the Cardinal and the other courtiers enjoyed

the unsatisfactory pleasure of seeing the pale and haughty Hapsburg face pass by distant and inaccessible.

In the midst of all these troubles, and after a long interval, a letter on ivory notepaper with a rich gold border at last arrived. The Queen wrote very curtly. She thought the necklace was too dear, and was thinking about returning it, unless the price were reduced by 200,000 francs. Rohan, who foresaw that this would lead to trouble with the Boehmers, gave full vent to his displeasure. Jeanne, on the other hand, replied coldly and calmly, that she had always advised him not to settle the business of the necklace on the lines indicated by the Queen, for he knew how unaccountable women were. Now Monseigneur would have to put a pleasant face on an unpleasant business, and sleep on the bed he had made for himself.

Miserable and mortified, Rohan accordingly repaired to the office of the two worthy jewellers, for the purpose of acquainting them with Her Majesty's will. They immediately gave vent to loud shouts of Help! Murder! which the presence of their illustrious visitor did not serve to modify. Carl August Bohmer howled, while Paul Bassenge whimpered. The massive iron safe groaned. Heavy tears fell out of the great ledger of the firm and the two chairs on which were seated the partners, whose hearts had received such a severe blow, rocked with compassion.

Bassenge took a dirty and much-used handkerchief from his pocket in order to wipe the stream of perspiration from his brow, and Bohmer reprimanded him for his unseemly behaviour with a poisonous glance. No, they could not hear of any reduction in the price. What, 200,000 francs all at once? They could not think of such a thing! As it was, the interest which they had had to pay on the necklace for the last ten years had almost consumed their fortune. And thus they went on and on, with all manner of *Achs!* and *Ohs!* and cries and tears of woe.

But Rohan would not give in. The Queen had made up her mind, and if Messrs. Bohmer and Bassenge would not try to

meet her wishes the necklace would have to be returned and the contract cancelled. That was too much! The jewellers knew perfectly well that legally they were entitled to claim the full amount, but would it be wise for the sake of 200,000 francs, to allow things to go to such extremes as to involve them in an endless suit against the Crown of France? And then what would become of their title of Court Jewellers to Her Majesty? Wherefore in a state of deepest despair, they at last gave in.

On taking leave of them Rohan advised them immediately to write a letter of thanks to Her Majesty and to hand it to her personally at Versailles at the first opportunity. Given at a moment of dilemma, it was a piece of advice which proved of fateful import both to the life of the Cardinal and also to that of the woman of his heart. Bassenge hurried to his over-elaborately carved desk, and immediately drafted a letter in order to subject it to Rohan for criticism; but the fashionable prince of the Church was not altogether pleased with its somewhat businesslike tone. To his own misfortune he corrected the clumsy style and drafted it in his own precise phraseology, with the result that in the end although it was more cultured, its contents were extremely confused. It ran as follows:—

“Your Majesty,—

“It is with the utmost delight that we venture to assume that our acquiescence in the new terms of agreement just proposed, and to which we respectfully and dutifully submit ourselves, may be interpreted merely as a fresh proof of the devotion with which we fulfil the commands Your Majesty deigns to give us, and we take the liberty of expressing our genuine satisfaction that the most beautiful diamond necklace in the world should be permitted to serve as but an inadequate adornment for the most illustrious and most benevolent of all sovereigns.”

Incidentally, the Court Jewellers pointed out to Her Majesty that the price of the necklace was now one million four hundred thousand francs, which would, like the former sum, be divided into four half-yearly instalments, the first of which was due on the 1st of August. The Cardinal thought this would be

managed, and took leave of the two with further injunctions to observe absolute silence and discretion.

A few days later Carl August Boehmer, with the said letter in his hand, went to Versailles in order to take Marie Antoinette a shoulder buckle and some diamond earrings, a present from the King to his exalted spouse on the occasion of the baptism of the little Duke of Angoulême. He and his jewels were graciously received, and he thereupon delivered the fatal letter. But before the Queen had time to open the missive the arrival of Calonne, the Finance Minister, was announced, and thus Carl August was obliged to withdraw without having heard the royal decision. For naturally the business Monsieur de Calonne had to discuss took precedence.

As soon as the Finance Minister had gone, however, Marie Antoinette read her Court Jewellers' letter through twice and shook her fair and haughty head. Turning to Madame Campan, her lady-in-waiting, she said, "This Boehmer and his necklace will be the end of me! He seems to have gone mad! First he was going to drown himself if I did not buy it, and now after a little respite, he writes me a mad letter which I cannot make head or tail of. Conditions of payment? But the idiot must be suffering from hallucinations! Next time you see him, dear Campan, tell him to take a course of cold baths. They will certainly do him good in more respects than one." And the haughty Hapsburgian wrinkled her nose as if she could smell an evil odour. She then looked again half curiously and half fearfully at the contents of the letter; and shrugging her shoulders, suddenly held the paper over the candle, whose pale flame served to seal her letters.

And thus the letter was burnt. In the pungent smell of the scorched paper there was mingled a harsh aroma which had never before defiled the majestic atmosphere of the royal apartments. It was the harsh aroma of a burning flower, for at that light, which burned continuously in her study and was used by the Queen to seal her correspondence, whether grave or gay, the Lily of the Bourbons had burst into flame and now glowed

by itself in secret without anyone thinking of putting out the fire.

Lilium pedibus destrue. Uranus had begun his work. Rohan and the Boehmers could only regard the silence of the Queen as an acknowledgment that she actually possessed the necklace, as they had always believed, and that she agreed to the terms.

These first rumblings of the storm passed unobserved over Jeanne's head, although her alert mind saw looming above the horizon very definite signs that something was about to happen, the importance of which she had foreseen from the beginning, but whose actual effect it was much more difficult to estimate. She had only reduced the price of the necklace by 200,000 francs, with the object of introducing into the romantic game that touch of sober reality—a purchaser's anxiety about the sum to be paid—which would make the whole affair seem more plausible in case it ever came to light. As a matter of fact, it only served to make matters more confused.

Nevertheless Jeanne never for a moment felt dejected, for if everything failed, what could happen to her? Nothing!

The only disturbing feature was that for some time past she had been regarded with a certain amount of suspicion at the Maison de Strasbourg, and she knew only too well that this feeling had not risen independently in Rohan's mind, but had been kindled by Abbé Georgel and Baron de Planta. The former was inaccessible to any sublime feeling, while the other was madly in love with that stuck-up creature, Cagliostro's wife.

Moreover, there were certain other people who were thrusting the charming Jeanne aside and devoting themselves to the sulky straw-haired Turkey hen. Had not fat Cagliostro offered Jeanne his future, his two million pounds a year, and his hand? And now according to all she heard—and Jeanne's intelligence service would have done credit to a mighty police chief—the couple had recently been exhibiting to the world the spectacle of sweet bourgeois connubial bliss. They drove out together, they appeared at the theatre together, and they dined together. Much

as she hated Cagliostro, she was not at all pleased to see him with another woman, least of all his own wife. For that was perhaps the greatest possible insult to the blood of the Valois. A slight feeling of uneasiness gradually took possession of her. Cagliostro, it is true, had given her until the night of the 31st of July and the 1st of August for her final reply. Why precisely that moment? For the 1st of August was surely. . . . Almost violently she suppressed the thought that occurred to her and stamped her foot. Somehow or other her calculations were at fault, and Nicolas had still failed to dig out the Baroness Oliva.

Rohan grew more and more depressed every day. He was filled with ever greater longing for his friend, particularly as Jeanne, whose sudden access to wealth had given rise to strange rumours, some of which had even reached the palace of His Eminence, was also keeping away from him, so that he had been deprived of any news of the Queen. The whole thing was incomprehensible! When he examined the many letters Marie Antoinette had written him, friendly, almost tender letters, which he kept carefully in a Russia leather portfolio, he was full of radiant hope. But when he met her personally, no matter where, she turned aside without acknowledging his greeting, and cold as ice, walked away with a contemptuous smile. And yet everything must be in order, otherwise the jewellers' letter would not have been received in silence. There was also another slight ray of hope. The pay day was drawing ever nearer, and with it the prospect of another letter from the Queen; for it would be contrary to all ideas of what was becoming if she merely sent the money and did not accompany it with a little note. Thus with these crumbs of comfort, he nourished his impatient expectations. But they were too scanty to prevent his nights from growing ever more sleepless and his days ever more full of anxiety. Instead of being jolly and rosy as usual, his face now looked drawn and sickly.

And still Cagliostro kept away. This was also incomprehensible. Rumours of the coming amalgamation of all the Orders of Freemasonry under the primacy of Cagliostro also

reached Rohan's ears. Very little news of an enlivening nature came from Rome. The College of Cardinals, the Congregation of Rites and His Holiness did not seem to think much of the prince's memorandum. And the Queen buried herself in silence. Rohan withdrew entirely from the world. He, the familiar figure in society, had no interest in anything, not even in the newest sensation of all, which had set the heart of all Paris beating. On the 31st of July, in Baudard's exotically luxurious gardens in the suburbs, the famous Follies St. James were to be held, a gorgeous garden party to which all who had made a name either by money, rank or talent, were invited—in short half Paris. There were rumours of unheard of debaucheries and mad orgies to accompany the festival. Everybody had been invited and had accepted, from Sartines to Beaumarchais, from Calonne to Cagliostro, from Prince Louis Philippe to the Countess de la Motte. But even this did not succeed in awakening Rohan's interest.

In addition to all this he was suffering from a terrible shortage of money. Cerf-Beer, his good and faithful banker, had for the first time refused all help and the friend who had always come to his assistance hitherto had become inaccessible. No, no! Rohan would never again be able to appeal to Cagliostro. That was unfortunately all too clear. The only hope which sustained his drooping spirits was the thought of the letter he hoped to receive from the Queen. Every day he awaited it with ever growing anxiety. He had to wait a long time.

Jeanne did not make her appearance until the 31st of July. A new idea had occurred to her ever resourceful and hopeful brain.

"At last!" With this exclamation, uttered with a loud sigh, the Cardinal greeted her. He looked very pale. Ceremoniously dropping on her knees, she kissed his Bishop's ring. She was very grave, and looked anxiously at him. As she said nothing, he asked her impatiently, "And what about the letter?"

"I have no letter to give you," she replied bluntly. Beads of perspiration broke out on Rohan's brow. "But this is im-

possible! What can the Queen be thinking about? The day after to-morrow is the 1st of August!" He scented trouble. "Have you seen Her Majesty?" he asked standing before her and looking sternly at her.

She curtsied low, and gravely replied, "Her Majesty has charged me with a message for Monseigneur." Rohan's legs trembled. He sat down and motioned to Jeanne also to be seated. "Her Majesty can only pay the instalment due to-morrow on the 1st of October, but she undertakes to pay a bigger sum to the jewellers on that date."

Rohan was suddenly filled with violent suspicion. "And why does the Queen not write that to me herself?" His beautiful voice sounded harsh as he spoke. Jeanne stared into the distance. "Her Majesty is very much worried." Burning sympathy touched the soft heart of the prince with its tender fingers. Oh, that was another matter! The dearly beloved woman was in trouble! In that case she must be helped. Nevertheless, he said with some hesitation, "All the same, I cannot understand why the Queen does not write a word to me about it."

"She has asked me, Monseigneur, to greet you and hand you this." Whereupon she gave him an envelope containing bank-notes to the amount of 30,000 francs. The Cardinal looked desperately at her. "What can I do with that?" Almost inaudibly Jeanne replied, "It is the interest on the instalment that is to be paid on the 1st of October." So saying, she leant back in her armchair as if she were utterly exhausted.

This seemed to Rohan a conclusive proof. The idea that Jeanne might herself have raised so large a sum, in order to secure two months respite, during which she would ferret out the millions of the Freemasons—how could such an idea enter the boyish mind of the prince; for did he not know that Jeanne had no money? And he was now almost glad that his suspicions had been unfounded.

"So the Queen is worried?" He looked enquiringly at Jeanne. She nodded sadly. "The King has accused her of spending too

much money." A haughty smile curled Rohan's beautiful mouth. How like that vulgar clockmaker to upbraid his beautiful wife on account of a few francs! He shrugged his shoulders crossly and saw that it only remained for him to go to the jewellers and inform them of the fresh turn of events.

His interview with the Boehmers was more than painful.

The moment he appeared, the doors of their safes crashed open as if loosed by magic hands. The great secret ledger seemed to roll of its own accord on to a desk and its leaves to turn over automatically until the hidden secret account peered freely into the light opening at the pages on the right and left of which the debits and credits regarding the precious necklace were to be entered. The two jewellers hurried forward smiling and rubbing their hands to receive their noble visitor. For he was certainly bringing them the first instalment for the necklace. But imagine the feelings of the two poor worthy Saxons when Rohan broke to them the terrible news that the pay day was to be postponed until October!

Horrible! Most horrible! Never had so much moaning and groaning been heard before, except perhaps in front of the much abused Wailing Wall in Jerusalem on one of its busiest days. It was a painful concert. Rohan did not feel at all well as he listened to it. Finally he handed the desperate wailers the envelope containing the 30,000 francs, which were to meet the interest on the first instalment. But this proved to be too much for the already wretched partners. The wild blood of the warlike Maccabbees was roused for a moment in Carl August's nervous heart, and he could not help himself—he rebelled against the prong that had been thrust with such burning pain into his naked flesh. With resolute defiance the jaundiced one shook his yellow head, and in a piping voice that almost broke down in the face of his own immense courage, he said, "We protest, and accept the 30,000 francs merely as a payment on account of the 300,000 francs which are due the day after to-morrow."

The covers of the great ledger closed to with a bang as if of

their own accord. As if pushed by unseen hands, the doors of the safe clanged with a hostile and thundering crash into the locks. The air was electric with mortified silence. Little Paul Bassinger whined softly to himself, "Was ever Cardinal in a more infamous position?"

He tried to appeal to them with friendly persuasion. "But my dear sirs, what is the meaning of all this? Did you not see Her Majesty's own signature at the foot of the contract? Do you venture to doubt the word of a Queen? Or do you imagine that Her Majesty cannot pay? It is only a temporary financial embarrassment which will be over in a few weeks." But Carl August Boehmer would not listen. "Monsieur de St. James, our creditor is getting impatient, and wishes to see the money after all this time. And we too are at the end of our tether. If Her Majesty does not pay in a few days at latest, we shall be obliged to declare ourselves bankrupt. Your Eminence will have no difficulty in picturing the consequences of such a step." He stopped defiantly. Bassenge's whimpering sounded desperate, like the primeval dirges of his people. Rohan rose to his feet. "I will acquaint Her Majesty further with the situation," he said in icy tones. "You shall hear from me in a few days."

On the way home the Cardinal turned the situation over in his mind. It was only too clear that it concealed many dangers. The Boehmers' refusal might quite easily lead to a catastrophe. Oh, if only he had had the money himself, how gladly would he have given it to secure a moment's peace for the Queen! His heart bled for her. Could he try approaching Baudard, the jewellers' creditor? But it would probably be of little use. Oh, if only Cagliostro had not cut himself off in such an unfriendly way! Desperate and depressed the Cardinal repaired at last to the Place Vendôme. But he did not see Baudard. On returning home he wrote immediately to Jeanne, begging her most urgently to see Her Majesty at once in order to receive instructions. Whereupon, he took to his bed with a high temperature and was at home to nobody.

From the window of the corner room overlooking the Place Vendôme, which was Baudard's habitual spyhole, the rosy Grand Master of the French Freemasons and the rancorous Grand Master of the Illuminati looked on highly amused as Rohan, with bowed head, stepped back into his carriage and drove off. This was the second time in the course of that afternoon that he had driven up to see Monsieur de St. James, but on both occasions the porter had courteously informed him that his master was unfortunately away. Baudard had not the slightest intention of receiving the Cardinal. The time was ripe.

Dusk was already falling. Ximenez broke the silence. "Go to Cagliostro, Señor Baudard. As he has fixed to-morrow for the day of your festival he ought to be ours on that day. Meanwhile I shall take the necessary steps. The day after to-morrow Paris will be flooded with hundreds of thousands of leaflets—'The Necklace of the Queen, a Dialogue between the Cardinal as Lover and the Queen as Thief!'"

Baudard rang the bell and ordered his carriage.

Cagliostro's wild blood was sick. The twilight which on other occasions was the time of day he hated most, he now seemed to pull defiantly about his fat shoulders, as if he were awaiting some event or catastrophe, and some hand other than his own were in a position to bring it about. For he knew that it must come. For to-morrow was the day on which important decisions would be reached. Jeanne's reply—he smiled unctuously. Oh well, the silly goose would laugh the other side of her face now. But besides that. . . . The motif of Finance Minister rang in his soul like a shrieking shawm and rising into a higher key romped with joy. Cagliostro knew that Sartines would be there. He waved his hand vaguely. That hand had grown fat in the last few weeks, evilly fat and white and slightly redolent of bourgeois gloom. His magic laboratory, the Egyptian Lodges, his magnetic experiments which had frequently failed of late, so that he had been forced to have recourse to conjurer's tricks, no longer afforded him any pleasure. All

of a sudden his plans were shifted to a far distant blue and sunny sphere, from which romantic visions dawned!

"It is a great shame!" He expectorated, uttered a curse which came from the very depths of his soul and suddenly noticed that his heart had begun to beat. Outside he heard voices. Lorenza entered and behind her, good-humoured as ever, came Baudard. Filled with dark jealousy, Cagliostro looked up.

Lorenza only nodded to him and disappeared into her dressing-room. Baudard went up to the Master with a smile. He was bursting with news and happy excitement.

But this time Baudard was unlucky. What he told Cagliostro about Rohan and the Queen seemed to bore the Master as though he had known it all along. So Baudard, with unctuous flattery, began to talk about the festival, the crowning glory of which was to be Cagliostro's presence. The Master merely grunted. But the little Frenchman was not to be discouraged and described with great good cheer and gusto how he had gathered together the finest dancers and actresses in the whole of France, jolly, pretty little things, as well as interesting women from the highest circles, who would attend the garden party veiled. Among them there was even a dear friend of the Master.

Despite his dark broodings, Cagliostro's eyes flashed.

Merrily came the chirruping reply, "You have guessed who it is without my telling you. Yes, quite right, Madame de la Motte, very much décolletée!"

Oh her breasts! A hot wave of sensuality passed over the Sicilian, a voluptuous feeling of mingled lust and revenge. Jeanne? Splendid? Fancy holding her in his arms at the feast in a hidden corner and whispering between two embraces, "There, here you are! Here's ten francs for the favours you have bestowed! And now go to the devil!" what a glorious thought! His cheeks swelled and his chin was thrust out. Then, after this virtuous deed, to go straight home to Lorenza, when she would most certainly grant his request. A sort of St. Vitus's

dance of lust raged through his body which had grown flabby, and, pulling him out of his chair forced him to dance heavily round the room. He croaked a wild sailor's song, interlarded with obscenities.

Baudard looked on cheerfully. *Sacré bleu!* Was he as pleased as all that at the thought of meeting the little de la Motte? So he must still be in love with her! But then how did matters stand with his own wife? He nodded his appreciation. Evidently a most versatile man! Just what was wanted for the primacy of the Freemasons!

Cagliostro gave him a friendly slap on the shoulder which made Baudard shrink up into nothing.

"Weren't you speaking a moment ago about Rohan and the Queen? I was not listening properly. What do you know of the affair?"

But picture the astonishment of the Grand Master of the Egyptian Lodges when it transpired that the innocent Baudard knew everything! *Sapristi!* they were devilish fellows! The impenetrable black wilderness of his face turned appreciatively to the gay Parisian when he began to talk about the lampoon which on the morrow was to be circulated in hundreds of thousands all over Paris.

His eyes suddenly gleamed and his great head nodded approval. That was really amusing! A fine roguish trick worthy of himself. *Corpo di bacco*, that would cause a sensation! Surely the painfully well-groomed Baudard had not hatched that egg! The idea had unquestionably grown out of the dung of that rascal Ximenez! But it would be a glorious scandal! That yellow beast had Spanish blood in his veins and not only scent, like the wretched perfumed St. James! Money here and money there, but one also wanted a little entertainment in the pursuit of one's calling!

With evil joy he rubbed his hands together. He thought Rohan deserved the humiliation. Why had he allowed himself to be incited against him? Now he was getting a blow on the head from which he would probably never recover.

What an idiot he was! Aristocratic and wealthy, and yet he had nothing but this senseless rubbish in his head! If only he had been in Rohan's place, what could he not have made of the world? What a magnificent infernal muddle!

He strode excitedly up and down the room. There was Jeanne. . . . He wondered how much she had made out of the diamonds. If only he had fled that day with the necklace in his pocket! He stopped and grinned at Baudard.

"And what are you going to do with the minor actors in this drama? I know, for instance, that there is a certain pretty woman. . . ."

The Frenchman raised a plump hand deprecatingly. "I beseech you, Master, your little friend will be taken by us to London and placed in safety. It is all arranged."

Cagliostro snorted discontentedly but said nothing. The fellow evidently referred to Jeanne. But there was time enough for that! He would see her to-morrow and the 1st of August would be time enough to think about what was to happen to her. But what about Rohan? . . . Suddenly he became conscious that at heart he had never liked Rohan. Was Rohan to be killed? Why not? The elegant prince was not altogether unsympathetic to him. Nevertheless he could not help remembering with faint fury many an occasion when the very sight of that skirt hunter's beautiful white hair had made him feel sick.

Baudard looked deep into his eyes. "Moreover, Master, we are hoping that in the course of the festival to-morrow you will at last make up your mind to give your consent. The Freemasons of the whole world are waiting on your decision."

Cagliostro hesitated before he answered. In the first place he made it a habit to force people to yield by making them wait; and secondly, if he were now to have a share in bringing Rohan to the scaffold, all his great plans with regard to Rome would have to go to the devil, and he was still very much in love with his scheme.

On the other hand, Rome!—that would mean that Lorenza

would become more and more religious. And what if she were in love with Rohan? She certainly had a partiality for men of exalted rank. *Santo porco!* Rohan must die! And once more he came to a standstill in front of Baudard, and seizing the button of his jabot, stared the oily Frenchman grimly in the eyes. "To-morrow at midnight you will have my answer."

He had pulled the button so hard that it came off. Baudard waved aside the accident with a laugh and with a charming bow replied: "That will be the crowning glory of the festival."

Cagliostro suspiciously examined the dainty little metal button which had remained in his hand. "Is Rohan in Paris?" Baudard guessed his companion's thoughts. "As a matter of fact the Cardinal is still staying at the Maison de Strasbourg, but for the last few days he seems to have grown shy of the world." He gave a laugh of amusement. Cagliostro sniffed the button peevishly. Brass, was the thought that went through his head. Brass gilt! He looked almost provocatively at Baudard. "I should like to be alone now!"

The Grand Master of the French Lodges was not in the least offended, but nodding calmly, he gave a courteous little bow, and without another word, made for the door.

Cagliostro burst into loud roars of harsh laughter. How strangely everything was conspiring to raise him aloft! The Freemasons offered him a throne and a fortune! Rohan's fall and the scandal which would necessarily follow would increase the power of the Freemasons. Rohan. . . .

He leant back and flung the brass button across the room. Yes, he could certainly have helped Rohan, but he was immensely pleased to see such blockheads having their noses rubbed in their own stupidity. And yet such help would really be a security, in a sense, it was as good as hard cash. Rohan was grateful, that he knew, and Rohan's gratitude might one day be of great value. But with these damned reptiles, on the other hand, who wanted him as leader, one never knew what the morrow would bring. It was a damned ticklish post that they were offering him!

At first sight it certainly seemed extraordinarily attractive and in his heart Çagliostro had long ago made up his mind to accept it. He would then quietly amass as much as was necessary to enable him, if matters went wrong, quietly to slip away! Everything in the world was subject to modification and change, not merely financial conditions and the superfluous thoughts of man, but above all one's damnable luck. For he knew only too well that in his horoscope the *pars fortunæ*, the wheel of fortune, shone upon by the sun and moon on his birthday was in a bad quartile, and not sufficiently strong to stand in menacing opposition even to the hour of his death. Regarding the duration of his luck he had long been exceedingly sceptical and it was now incumbent upon him to quaff a great draught from the tankard of the Goddess of Fortune and recollect reserves for grey days and black hours.

Might not Rohan's gratitude be such a reserve? He thought it over for a moment and finally shook his head. No, it was not worth while!

A soft stream of sweet fragrance spread through the darkness of the room. From the white in her dress he concluded that night had fallen. Lorenza came up to him. Oh, how pleasant it was to have that soft little feminine hand on one's brow. But the strange dark ring in her voice irritated him. There was something in it which gave him a faint feeling of giddiness. He looked at her, angry and bewildered. "What do you want?"

"Alessandro, Alessandro!"

Never before had she called him by that name. Even when she called him Giuseppe, he regarded it as a sort of honour and now all at once she used the name which he had given himself. Her hand glided over his hair. She stroked him. A hot wave of lust passed over him. He flung his arms around her soft hips and pressed his head to her body.

"Lorenza!"

"We have been strangers for a long time." His head almost wallowed in her body and while her little hand glided softly

over his neck and nearly deprived him of will, she said with a strange hard smile, "Alessandro, I would like to see into your heart."

It was infernally difficult to wrench himself away from that sweet body, and though he felt his head bowed in bitter subjection he asked almost inaudibly, "What shall I do?"

Her voice was clear and childish, "Help Rohan!"

A fierce malicious glance went up to her. "Your lover?"

She smiled, and bending her face to her husband she answered softly and kindly, "He was never that! But it is terrible to think that you might help him in his misfortune but refuse to do so. You alone can save him!"

The powerful head turned towards her. Despite the darkness she saw the gleam in his eyes. "And what if I do help him?" Suddenly he felt her silently press something cold and angular into his hand. He knew at once that it was a key, the key to her room! His hand trembled.

"When?" Very softly came the reply. "To-morrow, if you want to."

Like a beast of prey he suddenly leaped into the air and laying his fingers heavily on her shoulder, drew her face towards him so that she could feel his breath. "I will help you!"

The 31st of July broke hot and misty. It was the day on which all the churches were celebrating the feast of St. Ignatius Loyola, a great and important festival for all devout Christians.

The streets of Paris were more full of life and bustle than usual. Tailors with their sempstresses, milliners, confectioners, hairdressers, flower vendors, and sightseers hurried backwards and forwards. Half Paris was preparing for the garden party at the *Follies St. James*, for everybody knew that wild orgies would be held there. In the sunny alleys of the Palais Royal groups of gay ladies gathered, and swinging their parasols were already eagerly discussing the pleasures of the evening, to which many of them would not be admitted. For Baudard, although he had taken care to secure plenty of beauty and pleasure for

his guests, had also taken every precaution to exclude all too doubtful characters.

The pasty-faced Nicolas and fair Rétaux, his friend, were sauntering discontentedly arm-in-arm through the streets. Jeanne, who was absorbed in her preparations for the festival, had ordered the two men, who did not happen to be invited, out of the house. And now, filled with envy, the pair were discussing who the visitor, who had come to her late the previous night, could possibly be. He was a gaunt and swarthy mendicant monk, with a huge aquiline nose, who on asking to see Jeanne, had been received with great excitement and delight. She had been closeted with him behind closed doors for a whole hour, and when he had gone, she had not even thought it necessary to acquaint the two disgruntled men with the strange visitor's business. But she had been full of majestic graciousness and good-humour and merrier than ever.

She had not dropped a hint of what had taken place, but it required no such hint for both men to know that the stranger's business could only have been connected with the necklace. For, although Jeanne had always pretended that she was not in the least concerned about the affair of the diamonds, they both knew that in her heart of hearts she was extremely uneasy, and that mean and miserly though she was, she had brought herself only a little while ago to give the Cardinal 30,000 francs out of her own pocket.

In vain did Nicolas and Rétaux ponder over the part which this stranger was playing in the affair of Jeanne and the diamonds. Jeanne had mysterious acquaintances. But although the two were lost in thought they did not fail to look into every pretty face concealed beneath a hat, and carefully to scrutinise and comment upon the occupants of every carriage that passed.

Suddenly Rétaux stopped spellbound, and in a sort of ecstasy gripped Nicolas's arm so that it hurt. Drawn by four magnificent cream-coloured horses, a carriage drove by. "There

she is!" Jeanne's fair secretary exclaimed. "Who?" growled Nicolas. "Why, the girl of last August!" groaned Rétaux.

In the carriage sat a veiled woman. But for a little snub nose, not much of her face could be seen. But in a trice the two were running after the carriage.

It was a long and hard chase. Nicolas had already fallen out gasping for breath at the Bastille, but Rétaux continued racing after the fast disappearing carriage. The Boulevard St. Antoine seemed unconscionably long. Why had he not noticed the arms on the vehicle as it passed? It then turned into the Rue St. Claude. Rétaux cut round the corner and suddenly stopped as if thunderstruck. The front door of the corner house had just closed. The carriage belonged to Count Cagliostro!

The council of war at the Rue Neuve St. Gilles did not last long. In a flash Jeanne sent her hairdresser, her milliner and her maid to the devil, and she certainly had a far from pleasant expression on her face. "You must have been mistaken," she observed emphatically. "No, no! I am certain it was she," retorted Rétaux.

"Well, if all you idiots declare that it was certainly she, I will go there myself." And Jeanne sprang to her feet. Aghast, not to say terrified, Nicolas cried, "You are surely not going to Cagliostro?"

A short laugh from the auburn-haired royal wasp was his reply. "Oh, you most foolish of all fools! Only a man could ask such an idiotic question. I go to Cagliostro? Why not, in God's name? But no, you ass, I am going to his wife; the goose will certainly blab everything." So saying she ran to her bedroom and half an hour later, shimmering in baptiste and lace, like a beautiful summer butterfly, she left the cool house and fluttered gaily to the Rue St. Claude, gracefully passing the gloomy Bastille, which she did not even deign to look at.

She was allowed to enter and fluttered up to Lorenza, overflowing with cordiality, and tried to kiss her. "At last, my

dear Countess! My word, you grow more and more beautiful every day!"

The ghost of a smile curled Lorenza's lips. She offered her a seat and sat down herself, taking care that all the light should fall on her own face. With perfect calm and friendliness she said, "Surely you are taking part in to-day's festival?" With childish surprise, Jeanne looked up. "How do you know that?"

"Baudard told us so."

That "us", so carelessly uttered, was like a stab to Jeanne. But a second stab was immediately to follow. "My husband is very much looking forward to seeing you again. You have made yourself so scarce lately, Madame." Not a sign of mockery could be discerned on the beautiful face of the Roman woman. The goose evidently meant everything quite seriously, thought Jeanne, and with courteous civility she replied, "I am also much looking forward to seeing Count and Countess Cagliostro at the merrymaking."

"Not me, Madame! I am not invited." This was the last stab, and it was almost mortal. Jeanne knew only too well that Baudard had not invited respectable women. She turned pale; but Lorenza's face remained as friendly as ever. No, no! She was only a turkey hen, nothing more! She therefore decided to open the attack.

"How is my little friend, the Baroness Oliva?"

Lorenza looked at her in surprise. "I know no one of that name." Jeanne bit her lips. "So you do not know Nicole Legaye after all?" she enquired hastily, forgetting that she had revealed a secret. "No!" Lorenza replied emphatically, keeping her face steadily turned to her companion. The Frenchwoman's eyes eagerly scanned her calm features. She was certainly not posing; not a muscle in her face moved to betray her. She was clearly nothing but a goose!

"Why have you got such deep shadows under your eyes?" she asked impudently. "Is it still the Marquis de Launay?"

The Roman woman flushed faintly and an angry gleam en-

tered her eyes. She shrugged her shoulders. "Might I ask you to put that question to Count Cagliostro?"

With a catlike motion Jeanne glided over to her. "Don't you be so stuck up!" she said scornfully. "The day may come when you will be glad of a discreet and experienced friend. Who knows? I might be in a position to give you all sorts of information about Monsieur de Cagliostro."

Lorenza now smiled. It was a mysterious but kindly smile. "You would find it difficult, Madame, to tell me anything new; or perhaps you wanted to give me a fright by telling me that Alessandro asked you to be his wife at Bar-sur-Aube? But reassure yourself! Whatever happens, I shall know how to bear it. Roman women are not given to complaining!" With her head held high she remained a moment longer before the excited Frenchwoman, and looked earnestly but not unkindly into her flashing eyes. Then she gave a little bow. "Do you want anything more from me? No? Then *au revoir*, Madame," and she walked out.

Quivering with rage, Jeanne spat an insult after her, but a moment later she was thoughtfully frowning. Her pretty little nose was quivering. She was seeking a scent. Something was being hatched here, something was being arranged, something was about to happen. Yes, but the Spaniard had promised that she would be safe. So she felt secure. Besides, she would see Cagliostro that evening, and then. . . . She smiled. You prim and proper Roman turkey hen, just you wait a bit! And then there was Rosalie who would be able to find out from Benito whether the Baroness Oliva. . . .

Jeanne fluttered home on the wings of the wind.

But in Lorenza's dressing-room the new maid, a pretty little thing with a charming little snub nose, dropped on her knees before her mistress and sobbed, "Oh, save me from that woman, Madame; she is determined that misfortune shall overtake me!"

Much astonished, Lorenza raised the girl from her knees. "Do they call you Baroness Oliva?"

Dance the Carmagnole!

The violins sobbed with longing. The flutes sighed declarations of love. Horns blared, trombones brayed and drums rattled. The afternoon sky of the 31st of July hung misty and sweltering above the beautiful wide open park laid out in the English fashion. The bright silk attire of numberless guests gave a festive touch to the deep green of the summer lawns. Songs and laughter rang from every coppice and alley. Servants, bearing richly laden silver salvers, rushed hither and thither, and crystal and glass caught the rays of the sun and sent them glancing right and left across the garden. On the dancing ground, which was strewn with fine sand in front of the bandstand, lively couples were whirling round and round. There was a flutter of fans and a rattle of swords, and bright eyes sparkled wantonly. Everybody was enjoying themselves at the *Follies St. James!*

But lo! the clarinets took up a new motif. Women's laughter rose clear as crystal to the dull hot sky. Castanets rippled, and from a thicket issued the wild singing of—*Dansons la carmagnole! Vive le son du canon!*

Significant looks were turned in the direction of eyes that suddenly lit up, heads nodded eagerly to the stormy rhythm of the new popular song of the restless Paris mob. It was the forbidden song, the favourite song, which had made its way in spite of every obstacle from the south of France to the north; it was the song of to-morrow, hated by the police; it was the song sung against the Queen.

A sigh, and it stopped. The crowd continued to hum and whistle it. Delayrac's thin and charming little melody died away and became almost inaudible.

Dance the Carmagnole!

With his head proudly thrown back, Monsieur de Beaumarchais strode angrily along the broad main alley strewn with fine sand. That Italian mountebank, Cagliostro, had got on his nerves! What?—he the handsome Beaumarchais, the idol of the ladies, to become a nobody when this ugly fat little

Sicilian made his appearance? And the fellow sweated like a wild bull! *Fi donc!* Beaumarchais pulled out a fine lace handkerchief perfumed with ambergris and fanned his face with it. The clown could make nothing but clumsy jokes and ribald allusions. And yet the pretty girls stuck to him like burrs! What an extraordinary corruption of taste! With deep furrows across his lofty brow, Monsieur de Beaumarchais strode proudly along, haughtily exhibiting his famous person to the crowd. And as he went through the main alley, he bowed right and left, for all Paris was there, and what with his law suits, his feuds, and his adventures, he had come to know all Paris. Everybody was there, even that loathsome withered up Monsieur de Sartines, the Chief of Police, was there, with whom he had had many a conflict. Oh, and what a sour look he gave him! Yes, yes, the police did not like it when the notes of the Carmagnole rang out, and yet they could not interfere. It was a good joke on Baudard's part; and Beaumarchais almost smiled, at least he went as far in that direction as his dignity would allow. He fixed his gaze intently on the Chief of Police, so that the latter was at last obliged to look across at him. It was an exceeding cool, an extremely reserved greeting. And who was that portly-looking person at his side? The Finance Minister? Yes, a right good day to you, Monsieur de Calonne! Damn the swine, why was not he, Beaumarchais, with his speculative genius, Finance Minister? But what was that squalling in the coppice to the left? Somebody was croaking the revolutionary Carmagnole in an extremely unmusical manner. Damn it all! That fat bloated Cagliostro again! With women on his knees, women at his feet, and women leaning over his shoulder! What a Jewish satyr he was, with his bull neck and figure like a fatted eunuch! The furrows grew deeper on the noble brow. Without vouchsafing a greeting to anybody, Beaumarchais strode past pretending to have seen and heard nothing.

"Have you had any trouble with Monsieur de Beaumarchais?" Calonne enquired.

With a freezing smile, Sartines replied, "Hardly any, sir,

hardly any, as a matter of fact. All these scribblers are megalomaniacs. We have had one or two sharp tussles, because on high authority I had for many years to forbid the production of his amusing but highly disquieting plays. Until the Queen herself interfered; but otherwise. . . ." He waved his hand vaguely, "Beaumarchais is vain, and for a mere trifle will vent his spleen in lampoons."

Calonne smiled kindly. He, of course, was well acquainted with the well-known author's highly intellectual lampoons and pamphlets, in which Sartines had been represented as the most egregious obscurantist and sanctimonious humbug. He whispered, "Why did the Queen take his side?"

Sartines shrugged his shoulders, "A mere whim; for otherwise she is continually urging us to take measures against the revolutionary hydra. And yet she received Rousseau, and even had his boring operetta performed at the Trianon. I verily believe that before long the Carmagnole will be pronounced fit to appear at Versailles!"

Calonne looked the picture of good nature. "It is pretty music, one can literally feel it in one's bones." And he laughed softly. "But who is that fat fellow over there, with his crowds of women?"

Sartines coughed. "Cagliostro! Would you like me to introduce you? I believe he is a great financial genius. . . ." The Finance Minister seemed to pay no heed to the irony and smiled broadly. "What, the magician? I must confess that I had formed a very different image of him."

A wild burst of laughter forced the two men to look up. All the faces visible through the beautiful rose bushes were turned towards them. Evidently Cagliostro had just made one of his spicy jokes about the two statesmen. Calonne did not seem to mind much, but the Chief of Police turned away.

Dance the Carmagnole!

Guitars twanged, trumpets blared, mandolins rose sweetly above the din, and a buzz of voices came from the entrance gate. The host himself was leading a charming lady on his

arm. She was dressed in bright yellow and wore a thick black veil. At a sign from him there was a deafening flourish of trumpets.

In a ringing voice Baudard announced, "The Queen of the Feast!"

Cagliostro cast but one glance in the direction of the new arrival. His heart almost burst with joy and his eyes shone unctuously with sheer delight. He knew the little hussy. It was Jeanne! The hour of his most rapturous revenge was at hand. He pressed the soft little body of the woman on his knees passionately to his breast, so that the girl was obliged to scream for mercy. "*Santo porco*, I am going to have some sport!"

With charming mincing little feminine steps Jeanne, bearing a shepherd's crook with flowing streamers of bright diaphanous silk in her hand, tripped in her high heeled shoes at Baudard's side through the admiring crowd of cavaliers. The ladies of easy virtue stared at each other with their sparkling eyes almost bursting out of their heads in their endeavour to find out which of their colleagues or competitors had been given the honour of being the Queen of the Feast. They all shook their heads—no, they did not know her! But the men were much more concerned with her figure; for her flimsy frock revealed much more than it concealed. What a bosom! How delightfully she swung her hips, and what charming and provoking little calves she had! She was veiled, so she must be a respectable member of society. Oh, if only she would show her face!

Jeanne nodded her head gracefully and self-consciously right and left, and drank in the admiration that rose on all sides like highly-spiced intoxicating wine.

Calonne and Sartines met the couple and Baudard motioned to them to stop. "Gentlemen, allow me to introduce you to the foam-born Queen of Love herself, who has come down from her lofty throne and deigned to grace my poor little festival!"

Calonne who had already been examining the charming lady from a distance with his lorgnettes, drew the jovial Grand Master eagerly aside and whispered in his ear. Meanwhile Jeanne coquettishly shrugging her shoulders at Sartines, said, "I know you, sir." Sartines' sharp ears, accustomed to recognise people in the dead of night by some peculiarity in their voices, was not mistaken now. He bowed with stiff gallantry. "Quite right, Countess; but it would be better not to mention the name here." She nodded affectedly, and he courteously enquired, "Is your ladyship satisfied with the success of her little deal in diamonds?"

For a moment Jeanne's heart stopped dead, but she quickly realised that he could only be referring to the little trouble with Rétaux in February. With a somewhat strained laugh, she tapped him on the shoulder with her fan, "You wretch, fancy frightening the poor little fellow like that! Yes, thank you; Monsieur le Comte disposed of the diamonds very favourably in London." A moment later Baudard was at her side, whispering something in her ear, and with a charming little curtsy, she turned to Calonne. "Well, proceed, Finance Minister; I am ready to hear your report." And with a silvery laugh she took him by the arm, and led the poor man, who was almost trembling with excitement, through the crowd, which respectfully made way for him, without paying any heed to the sensation she was causing.

The beautiful veiled woman had stirred Calonne so deeply that his voice was quite hoarse. "Excuse me, Madame, if I am indiscreet. But I have just heard from Monsieur de St. James that Madame is intending to go to London shortly. If Madame should have no one to accompany her, I should be most happy if Madame. . . ."

"And what about the finances of France?" she asked with another silvery laugh, which made her companion's blood again gush like fire in his veins. She gave his arm a faint, almost imperceptible squeeze. "We shall see. But first of all, introduce me to the Marquis de Launay, who is standing out

there all alone with a gloomy face as if he were in his own prison."

Utterly bewildered, Calonne did as she desired. With an enchanting smile, Jeanne turned to the Governor of the Bastille. "I hear that you are hopelessly in love with Madame de Cagliostro?" With a daring smile he took stock of the bewitching little figure. Then bowing low, he kissed her delicate hand tenderly. And the way she squeezed his fingers as she released them sent fire coursing through his veins. . . .

Meanwhile Sartines had taken his host, who was constantly surrounded by servants and giving instructions right and left, but still smiled in a friendly way, into a secluded alley and entered into a political discussion with him. But Baudard was more harmless than ever. The hydra of revolution? His jolly brown eyes sparkled with merriment.

"No, no, sir, I do not believe either in spirits or exorcism! They are chimeras invented by an overstrung people." And he laughed. Who could have laughed a more convincing laugh?

"I received the information from a good source, Monsieur de St. James. Apparently there is a conspiracy involving the whole of western Europe which has for its object the overthrow of the Bourbons. The documents are said to be in French territory concealed in a round subterranean vault."

Baudard halted and laughed uproariously. "It sounds almost as gruesome as a tale of highway robbery!" And he laughed even louder in order to gain time to think what he should say. Who on earth could have told Sartines about that? Practised in scenting treachery everywhere, he did not confine his suspicions to what appeared the most obvious sources of leakage. Was it Ximenez? Was it Cagliostro? Probably the latter. Everything was possible. But what could have been his object? His expression grew ever more winning. "Fairy tales, fairy tales, my dear Sartines; for in the first place, with your proverbial flair, you would have ferreted out any such organisation long ago, and secondly with the exception of the Jesuits, there is, as far as I know, only one society embracing the whole

world, and that is the Order of Freemasons. The best proof that we are not contemplating anything in the nature of a revolution is to be found in looking at me." And he smiled at his companion. "And what is to be the price for revealing this plot?" His voice sounded kind and soft as butter.

Sartines leant forward and whispered, "The post of Finance Minister."

Baudard's simple laugh sounded more honest than ever, if that were possible. "Well, there you have it! I thought as much! A nice piece of jobbery!"

It was Sartines' turn to laugh. And well pleased with themselves and each other the two rejoined the festival. It was already beginning to grow dark.

Dance the Carmagnole!

The clarinets shrieked, the drums rattled, the horns wailed. Liveried servants hurried hither and thither. The candles in the shining fairy lamps were lighted. Bright and glowing colours gleamed on every side. The sky was becoming more and more overcast, and it had become very sultry, while the gusts of warm wind afforded no relief. Was a storm blowing up? Was a tempest going to break over their heads?

But nobody troubled to look at the sky. The sky was far away, and the sweet world with all its enchanting sins and temptations lay so near. Corks popped. Every coppice became a lovers' nest. Ever louder and louder rang the music through the twilight while the laughter and sound of men's voices grew softer. The only place where there was any noise was in the grand pavilion, with its bright lights, where a gushing circle of admirers had collected round the fascinating Queen of the Festival, who was still veiled. There they were singing, and now and again the thin glassy notes of a spinet rang out. The eyes of the men hung on Jeanne's dancing feet and her silk-covered ankles. Her round firm little breasts shimmered enchantingly in the soft light.

There was also one other place where there was a good deal of noise. Surrounded by a bevy of ladies of easy virtue, Cag-

liostro was lying on a carpet spread on a soft stretch of lawn. Here too there was much giggling, singing and joking, and lecherous little sprites played a frivolous game, while the Great Orient of Medina pretended to notice nothing, as if like a bear, he was only carelessly amusing himself. His slaves, as he called them, had to comb his hair, massage his belly, and clean his nails, and he groaned with delight when one did her work particularly well. From his lips poured a flood of words, bombastic rodomontades, mad blasphemies and indecent anecdotes, which drove his listeners into paroxysms of delight.

Suddenly he sprang up. A scorching gust of wind had just blown through the trees. "I must go now!" They wanted to stop him. But snorting, laughing and singing, he broke his way through. It was growing darker and darker.

He made straight for the pavilion which was a soft glow of red in the distance. His appearance caused a sensation. Walking carelessly up to the veiled lady he half scornfully took stock of her with his piercing leaden eyes, and seemed to be dissatisfied. Then with a strong nasal twang he said, "A good thing you came, my dear! At twelve o'clock I shall have something to say to you!" Whereupon, turning majestically away, his eyes fell upon the Marquis de Launay. "Oh, look, look!" he exclaimed with a hollow laugh. "The owner of our most feudal of all establishments! Has business been so very bad of late? I really must come one of these days and pay you a call with my wife, just to have a look at your rooms, Marquis of the Bastille!"

Paralysing silence fell upon the company. Everyone who met the basilisk eyes, which seemed to be a mixture of night, menace and horror, was petrified. Jeanne had become very quiet. How uncanny everything had suddenly become!

"Baudard had not you and I something we wished to discuss?" roared the Sicilian brutally. Once more he allowed his eyes to pass over the faces of the company, and when he saw Sartines, he winked at him with an expression of animated rage. Sartines understood the look, but unable to endure it, lowered

his eyes. He was overcome with a strange feeling of fatigue, and almost mumbled, "First of all, Count, I should like to ask your private advice about something, for you are a much-travelled man and will, I am sure, be able to help me."

Cagliostro drew his thick watch carelessly from his pocket. "I have got just five minutes, sir."

Sartines only began to feel a little better when they had taken their seat on a marble bench in the dark, and he even summoned up courage to cross his legs. Cagliostro turned sternly towards him.

"Where is the letter of investiture?"

The answer came in a businesslike voice, "The authorities prefer to keep Monsieur de Calonne, rather than rely on adventurers. On the other hand I could offer you two other posts."

"Well, I do not wish to be Prime Minister, nor do I wish to be King! What is the post you have the effrontery to offer me?"

"Resident Governor of Cayenne. . . ."

"That is the place when they deport criminals, is it not?"

"Quite right—or Governor of the Bastille, for the Marquis de Launay is thinking of retiring from his post."

"May I ask whether these proposals have sprung from your own dung heap?"

"It was Baron Breteuil who suggested them."

"*Porco di bacco*, that was an excellent joke!" And Cagliostro laughed uproariously. Resident Governor of Cayenne! If he accepted he would soon find himself in the circle of his equals, and the same applied to the Bastille! He rose and gave Sartines a friendly slap. "Amusing fellow! A pity you are all going under! Well, good-night!"

Sartines rose with difficulty. "You refuse?" In a falsetto voice Cagliostro exclaimed, "How clever of you!" The Chief of Police stammered, "And what if I were to have you arrested so as to force. . . ."

The Sicilian seemed to find the situation extremely comic. "Have me arrested and perhaps thrown into the Bastille? Fidi-

dlesticks! I could never credit you with the pluck to do a think like that, you milksop! Cagliostro in the Bastille would cause you too much inconvenience! The whole of Europe would begin to laugh at you. Just go back to the little de la Motte, sir; she is better suited to you. Good-night, and send Baudard to me!"

Sartines' staggering footsteps had hardly died away when Cagliostro was heard speaking in kindly tones into the darkness behind him. "Tell me, Ximenez, how much longer do you intend to remain standing there in the dark?"

The night did not seem to grow darker when the black figure sat down beside him. "You have got fine ears, Balsamo! My congratulations! Your suspicions the other day with regard to the wooden panelling were also not at all bad. But tell me, were you really intending to betray us to Sartines?"

The Sicilian grunted softly to himself—aye, he even began humming a melancholy Italian folk-song—*Occhi, perché piagate?*

The two were silent for a moment. Then Cagliostro remarked in friendly tones, "You please me, Ximenez! At least one can be honest with you, because you are a genuine rogue. Betray you? It is not likely that I should do that. I should have found some way of making the whole thing so confused that the people of Versailles would have fallen into the trap brilliantly in the end."

Ximenez replied almost cordially. "I believe you, Balsamo! I also feel great sympathy for you, and the proposals Sartines made just now were not really funny. But what is your game with the little de la Motte?"

Cagliostro giggled. "That is a private matter of my own. Perhaps I only want to give her little backside a thorough good hiding! Perhaps I want to send her to Saltpêtrière! I have not made up my mind yet. In any case I will take the most intelligent course and don't want to be interfered with."

"I understand! And what about your decision?"

"At midnight! I have one more thing to do. What about the pamphlets?"

"Everything is ready. To-morrow at midday the first fifty thousand will be distributed to passers-by in the streets."

Cagliostro rubbed his nose. "I think that might be postponed for a bit. But we shall discuss that too at midnight."

Ximenex hesitated a moment, and then enquired, "Where are you going?" "Do you want to know that as well?" Cagliostro bleated. "Touching confidence! But silence, here comes Baudard. I will say nothing before that blockhead. I will slip away. See you again at midnight. By the bye. . . . I am of course going to Rohan."

He sprang noiselessly into the darkness and Ximenez vanished like a ghost.

Dance the Carmagnole!

Violins were shrieking the song of their heart into the night, and tambourines were jingling and beating careless time to the music. Far away to the west the lightning flashed. The whisperings of lovers swelled to a breathless whirr. The murmur of the night was hot and weary.

With a swinging gait, his fine head thrown angrily back, Beaumarchais, the lion of the literary world, stepped out of the dim red glow of the pavilion into the starless whispering night. He was very much annoyed! There was Cagliostro gone, and yet he, the great dramatist had had no better luck! He had gone to the pavilion to win the charming Queen of the Festival, but in vain! She was surrounded by a solid ring of worshippers and had only vouchsafed him a weary smile. Calonne above all seemed to be in high favour, the boring financial monkey. But he was not the only one! There was that repulsively good-looking Marquis de Launay, the puritanically poisonous Sartines, and the ever-fragrant Baudard, and heaven knew how many more. Even that—Oh woe is me!—even that lascivious Mirabeau, who was as ugly as a lama, was among those whom she deigned to notice. But he, the genius Beaumarchais! . . . Oh, but things would have to be

different! Away with these foolish aristocrats! Fresh air! New blood! Revolution!

For the first time that evening he became aware of the music. His step became lighter and began to follow the rhythm of the melody. The hot wave of love was wafted to his ears through the night by the song of the violins, and burned his nerves. He wanted to hold a sweet rosy woman in his arms like. . . .

He stopped! Did he not hear a light footstep behind him? He turned round. Behind him came the Queen of the Festival unveiled; her face was enchanting and fascinating. Her lips were perhaps too full, but they were good for kissing. There were red glints in her auburn hair. Was she creeping up behind him? He was already pulling himself together to make a gallant bow, when lo! she vanished into the darkness down one of the side alleys. He went after her. A dry voice sounded imperiously in his ear, "*Union, silence, et vertu!!* A Grand Master stands before you, Brother Beaumarchais! Go you back to the Festival."

Muttering a curse, he stumbled away.

Ximenez seized Jeanne's quivering hand, and led her calmly away out of the park as if he could see in the pitch black darkness. Outside there was a postchaise with six horses harnessed to it. "All you need do is to jump in, and you will be in London the day after to-morrow."

With chattering teeth, she replied, "And what about Monsieur de Calonne?"

He gave a little cough. "He will join you in London."

"And Cagliostro?" As a matter of fact, the question on her lips was, "And what about Bar-sur-Aube? For that is where Jeanne wants to be in order to shine, and be admired and to rule, and she has not the smallest wish to be in the darkness and fog of London."

Her question took Ximenez by surprise. "Do you love Cagliostro then?" he snarled.

Like a flash the thought occurred to her that whatever she

answered it would secure her some respite. "I promised to speak to him about the matter to-day. I must wait for him! But how are things going, senor? Your promise that the Freemasons would protect me, whatever happens, holds good, does it not?"

With a sudden shudder she observed that she was alone. The Spaniard had vanished, the sweltering darkness had swallowed up her words. Anxiously she rushed back to the park. The bright lights along the main alley showed her the way to the dull red pavilion of her triumph. When she reached it, she found only the Marquis de Launay there. He sprang up when he saw her. The distant violins buzzed like bees drunk with honey.

"*Care! Care!*" A cabriolet was rushing full speed ahead through the dark streets of Paris. From the inside of the carriage the coachman was being urged to ever greater speed. As it was already after ten o'clock only a few lamps were burning, but from time to time the threatening brilliance of a distant flash of lightning would make the road as bright as day for a second or two. Thus it was impossible for the driver to lose his way, although the road was immediately enveloped again with hot thick darkness which seemed to grow ever more confusing and stifling.

Cagliostro was tearing along to Rohan. To Rohan! Ah, what did he care about the foolish old Prince of the Church and his utterly superfluous enthusiasm for the Hapsburg woman? For his part he could have strangled them. But there was Lorenza and had she not given him the key for that night? Convulsively his fingers grasped the piece of iron which had already grown quite warm.

"Faster, faster, in the devil's name, *figlio d'un cane!*"

"*Care! Care!*" The various quarters of Paris glided slowly by. Was the journey never going to end? He must at all costs be back by midnight, and after that—Oh, he almost groaned, so great was his lust. . . . Lorenza's door!

They pulled up before the Maison de Strasbourg. Cagliostro's brow was wet with perspiration as he got out. The doors seemed to open of their own accord before him.

Thoughtfully and with bowed head, the Cardinal left his little chapel. He felt that something fateful and incomprehensible was happening, something beyond his grasp, something that he could not see through, much less therefore direct. The dim light of a few candles cast pale reflections on the dark velvet of his cassock. He had been praying for a long time and wanted to go to bed, and lo! Cagliostro was announced.

So touched was he when, after he had abandoned all hope, he saw Cagliostro, that he almost lost his breath. There he was, with a surly expression, throning it heavily on a chair covered in gold brocade in the dainty little drawing-room. Deep lines of anger lined his square brow, and his eyes stared with an evil leaden look. He calmly resisted the Cardinal's attempt to embrace him. "Monseigneur, I have only come to see whether I can still do anything for you."

Naked terror threw out its black arms to seize the Prince, and he stammered, "What do you know?"

Cagliostro was silent and still looked malevolently at him. Suddenly the Cardinal's knees grew so weak that he was obliged to sit down. A terrible suspicion had begun to form in his mind.

Carelessly Cagliostro crossed his legs. The yellow candles by which the room was lighted burnt calm and bright. The Cardinal folded his arms. Cagliostro contemplated him with evident satisfaction and gazed cruelly and indifferently at him. "What has happened? Not much. . . ." Suddenly his eye turned with cruel ferocity on the Cardinal's face, which was drawn in an agony of terror, and like a hammer on an anvil his words fell on that face. "Early to-morrow the people of Paris will be surprised by a pamphlet!"

Rohan's hands were tugging at his neckerchief, which seemed suddenly to have grown too tight, and then they fell motionless to his sides. "A pamphlet?"

Slowly Cagliostro replied, "The cheated jewellers. A dialogue between the Queen as thief and the Cardinal as lover, concerning the purchase of a certain necklace." The Cardinal had fallen back into his chair and buried his face in his hands. That was the end! That was disgrace indeed! Like the blast of the Last Trump Cagliostro's voice roared in his ears, "Now what do you intend to do, Cardinal?"

Sadly and hopelessly the faithful blue eyes stared into the face of the prophet, "What do the stars advise?"

A laugh burst forth. "The stars? You fool! Do you really imagine that I draw my wisdom from the stars? My zodiac is the stupidity of mankind, and my unfailing astrology consists in my skill in discovering this constellation and interpreting it accurately. Do you understand, Sir Hierophant? To the devil with the whole of the magic stock-in-trade! The only reason I have for coming to Prince Rohan in order to tell him the plain truth is that certain inconveniences might result to myself from the consequences of his colossal stupidity!"

The Cardinal did not understand a word. All he could grasp was that at a moment when everybody else had deserted him, this man alone had come to see him. Tears rolled down his pale face.

"Let me see the letters!" By a show of brutal impatience he was trying to stifle the germs of compassion in his soul. The Cardinal was aghast. "What letters do you mean?"

"Foolish question! The letters from the Queen, of course!"

Rohan staggered up. The look that urged him on was hard as iron. "Go on!"

"Impossible. . . ." A command, the power of which he could not resist, urged him forward once more, and with hollow, mechanical steps he went over to his desk and took out from it his red Russia leather portfolio. Cagliostro's eyes remained fixed upon him until his trembling fingers at last handed over the letters.

Amused curiosity, profound contempt, and secret anger chased each other over the virgin forest of malice which was

Cagliostro's face. He only read two letters; then suddenly the whole packet flew into the air on to the floor, so that the carpet looked as if it were covered with snow. Rohan expostulated. "What are you doing? Those are Her Majesty's letters!"

A roar of laughter was his reply. "Her Majesty's letters!" bellowed Cagliostro, while his fat body shook with laughter. "You miserable fool! The Queen never wrote those letters!"

The Cardinal crossed himself. "You are possessed of a devil! Pull yourself together, Cagliostro!"

"She never wrote them! How could you have been so crazy? Ask and find out, if you want to. Ask the Marsan, ask the Soubise! Since when has the Queen signed herself Marie Antoinette de France? What nonsense! Only a love-sick fool could have taken them for genuine. Marie Antoinette is her signature, not a syllable more! Only a guttersnipe could have thought of such an idiotic forgery, and only a lunatic could have believed it!"

The Cardinal's lower jaw trembled convulsively and he stammered, "Then the contract with the jewellers is also. . . ."

"All forgeries!" thundered Cagliostro, and rose stiff and majestic. "All forgeries! Not a word of truth in them!"

The Cardinal collapsed, completely broken. "Impossible! For even if the letters are forged, one thing remains irrefutably true. . . ." He stopped.

Cagliostro's mouth was twisted into an oily grin. "And what is that?"

The Cardinal almost shrieked, "Why, I spoke to Her Majesty alone at night in the Park of Versailles!" As if he were walking in his sleep he stumbled over to the desk and took out a faded flower. "What about that rose. . . ?"

Cagliostro's answer was full of kindly banter. "Was she very charming? Was it a very dark night?"

Rohan closed his eyes wearily and, sunk in helpless sadness, remained silent.

Outside it struck the hour of eleven.

"The devil take Her Majesty and her rose as well! A little

prostitute made a fool of you, and our friend de la Motte pulled the strings."

With wide open eyes, Rohan stared at his companion. "Then I am lost! The necklace. . . !"

"Has been stolen, and you will have to pay for it."

Rohan shook his head slowly and Cagliostro grinned broadly. "That is what I thought!" He almost closed his eyes. "But perhaps I may be able to help, if you. . . ." He stopped a moment and then continued in matter-of-fact tones, "if you promise me to cut everything short here and go straight to Rome to carry through our business."

Rohan covered his face with his hands. "It is no good!" he stammered. "Rome will have nothing to do with it."

"The lunatics!" Cagliostro sprang snorting to his feet. He wanted to rush out into the street, but he suddenly remembered Lorenza. For a moment he wondered whether it would not be better and wiser to leave the blockhead to stew in his own juice and persuade Lorenza that he had tried to help him; and when once the bodily estrangement between them had been ended, even this little lie might be set right; for, after all, he would only have been acting for Lorenza's good. But a moment later he gave up the idea, moved by the strange new spirit of humanity that now possessed him. To do good without profiting by it!—he laughed at the idea; but it would impress Lorenza!

"Then I can see only one way which will enable me to stop the whole scandal," he snarled. "Both Church and State are abandoning me. Very well! We shall be Freemasons! This very day you must gain admission to the Order of Freemasons!"

Rohan stared helplessly at him. "A Cardinal and a Freemason? You forget the ban of the Church!"

Cagliostro's stern brow frowned darkly. "It is for you to choose, your own and the Queen's honour, or my way by which alone I can help you!"

"May God forgive me! Here! My hand!"

The violins were all silent, the trombones no longer roared, the twang of the guitars had ceased to sound through the sweltering night, and only one lonely flute raised its shrill note in the dull red light of the pavilion, in which Jeanne's admirers were sitting in a circle on carpets at her feet, when Cagliostro, just before the first stroke of twelve rang out, made his entrance. A veiled lady was walking beside him with her arm in his. Launay sprang up like one mesmerized. Jeanne too was taken aback, as everyone could see, for she had long ago taken off her veil, and had wound it round Calonne's head like a turban.

There was something strange about Cagliostro's stiff dignity, and a peculiar atmosphere also seemed to surround the woman on his arm. Baudard rose courteously. He evidently thought that Cagliostro had brought his wife with him. Calonne, who was too drunk to stand up, looked bewildered and tore the turban from his head. Beaumarchais grunted angrily to himself as he held a bottle of champagne outstretched in front of him which he was ogling affectionately. With a clear sighing note the flute died away.

Bottles were standing and lying about the floor. Sartines' legs shook beneath him and he stammered, "Fi-na-nance Minister!" and chuckled softly.

The veiled lady gave a little shiver and Cagliostro led her courteously to a chair. "Pray be seated, Madam." As she sat down the thick veil fell aside, Calonne uttered a shriek and getting on all fours, tried to raise himself to his feet. But Sartines, who had also seen what had happened, fell back, chuckling heartily once more and managed to balance himself sufficiently to give a deep bow.

Deathlike stillness reigned in the pavilion. Time became timeless. No one was aware of his neighbour. A vision more petrifying than tetanus paralysed their muscles. Was she not? . . . Oh, but was she not really? . . . Nobody dared to finish the thought. Impossible! Unthinkable!

Jeanne alone had noticed nothing, for her eyes were riveted

in fear on the wild lava of the Sicilian volcano darkened by countless devilries. What was going to happen now?

Cagliostro stood irresolute, first on one leg and then on the other. Like sheep they all stood staring. Sheep? Sheep! So stupidly did they stand and lie about, unable to do anything but stare!

A shadow fell across the door. There was no need for him to look round to know it was Ximenez. He laughed hoarsely. "You may take your veil off without fear, Madam. We are an intimate little company here." The unknown woman tremblingly unfastened the lace.

But before she had completely unveiled, almost everybody had fled from the pavilion. Ximenez stood cold and stern in the doorway and stopped no one. The veil fell! In her shepherdess's dress, just as Madame Vigée-Lebrun had painted her, sat the Queen, and yet she was in no way the Queen. Jeanne staggered back; whereupon Cagliostro went up to her and thrust a faded rose to her nostrils. "Do you remember this rose of yester year?" She uttered a piercing shriek and leant, with her face in her hands, against one of the windows. He flung the flower at her feet. With a little thud, the dry rose fell on the carpet. Like a lunatic she gathered up her skirts, and jumping over it, ran towards the door.

"Save me, Senor!"

"You will trip over that rose, Madam," a cold voice replied; and, uttering a shriek, she dashed forth into the night.

With a freezing smile, Ximenez stepped up to Cagliostro, who was still calm and composed. "I know what all this means, Balsamo. I can imagine what your conditions are. Rohan's stupidity is to be made good. Sign our agreement!"

Soaked with wine, the members of the orchestra, who had long ago fallen into a drunken sleep, were awaked by Jeanne's piercing yell and began to tune their instruments, and terrible discords rent the air. The first clap of thunder rattled in the distance. Unsteadily the violins began to wail. The horns still sounded drunk with sleep. The trombones grunted and here

and there a bewildered cry came from the dark coppices. A drum crashed out of time, and a frightened owl beat its terrified wings against the bright windows of the pavilion. Dance the Carmagnole!

The storm which broke over Paris on the night of the 31st of July and the 1st of August and the thunder and lightning which covered Rétaux's flight to Switzerland and the retreat of the de la Mottes to Bar-sur-Aube, had died down. The claps of thunder which had followed each other incessantly had roared themselves silent, and the diamond clear lightning had worn itself out. Peace reigned on earth and in heaven. Peace?

The little lamp which always burnt before the face of the Crucified One flickered a deep red and shadows crept across the room in which no candles were alight.

Lorenza had already been an hour on her knees in order to punish her poor body which she had abandoned to the lewd caresses of her husband.

Too late had she heard from his laughing lips that the salvation of the Cardinal was also to mean his utter damnation, and that it had been her request which had led to his disobedience to the laws of the Church.

Her senses still trembled at the thought of the wild and brutal passion with which he had smothered her and defiled her body. Infected by the fever of his frenzy, she had forgotten everything when, in order to make his superiority over the Cardinal clear to her, he had described the scene with Rohan, whom he had persuaded to join the Order of Freemasons. So Rohan had sold his soul! The help, which, at her request, Giuseppe had given him, had led to his eternal damnation. Did not everything about her lead ultimately to evil, no matter what she did? Cold with horror, she could not help thinking that possibly she had conceived that night.

She cowered hopelessly. Giuseppe was now damned for all eternity also, and had she not tried to save his immortal

soul as well? But it had all turned to his damnation as well as Rohan's.

To what a devilish bond had her request not led! With a laugh Giuseppe had shown her the place on his hairy arm from which the blood had been drawn for him to write his signature, and with another laugh, he had shown her the infernal record of the bond; and she had been silent. Besotted by the fury of his passion, she had been unable to say anything against it. Giuseppe had given up his Egyptian Freemasonry, which, through Rohan, might have been converted into an instrument in the hands of the Church, and had given his consent for them both to become irrevocably bound to ordinary Freemasonry, that is to say, to be partners in the work of Satan, who was ever on the watch to corrupt the souls of men! And all this only in order to possess her!

And she had so far fallen under the power of the Devil, that she had not resisted him, but infected with his fire, had shared his voluptuous orgy. Oh, eternal damnation! Amid the fierce storm of sensations within her, the dark flame still burnt in her soul.

She had castigated herself to the point of drawing blood. She had thrown herself before the image of the Crucified One. She had tried hard to pray. But prayers and tears were alike denied her.

At last a mad thought sent the blood to her heart. Was it not perhaps possible to undo the fateful thing that had happened? There was one person who knew nothing of the terrible bargain that had been struck that night, a person who was certainly a good Christian and who would surely not contemplate the damnation of so many souls unmoved, a woman who was so mighty, that it lay in her power to turn everything to good. Her last hope lay in the Queen, Marie Antoinette!

The Queen was kind! The Queen was rich! What if she went to her and threw herself at her feet? She must forgive; for after all, she was a woman! What Rohan had done, he had

done, after all, from love alone, and what a man does from love is never unforgivable!

And even if Rohan and Giuseppe and she herself were punished, what did it matter? Their souls would at least be saved!

She looked up at the Saviour in mad ecstasy. In the soft light of the dawn which was breaking over Paris, it seemed to Lorenza as if the Redeemer's suffering features smiled down at her, and in shy and agonised agitation her lips stammered for His blessing.

Tongue-tied and tearless, she gazed at the martyred body of the Christ. She thought she could now see the purpose of her path in life, and with its dancing glittering rays the golden morning sun wove a faint halo about the struggles of her childish soul.

In the mild grey of a misty August morning the Trianon lay like a white fairy palace in the midst of deep green woods. Marie Antoinette, who did not like the pomp and ceremony of Versailles, often used to retire with her private suite to the Trianon, and had done so in the first week of the August of this unhappy year. Here, far away from the cares of State, and from the eternal admonitions of her fat husband, she could lead a pastoral existence, devoting her time to her children with whom, after an early Mass, she used to play. When she was tired, Madame Campan would read to her, or else, dressed in light and airy shepherdess frocks, they would wander forth, and the woods and copses would ring with their laughter as they played games of forfeit. The peace of their rural retreat was but seldom disturbed by visitors, for only very few people were admitted to the Trianon.

The fair Hapsburg princess had been troubled of late by disquieting dreams which made her live in constant dread of conspiracies. And her ministers, moreover, were always full of mysterious allusions to anti-royalist activities. Was it surprising, therefore, that the Queen had grown nervous?

Even on this cloudy morning, her large pale grey eyes looked dim, her aquiline nose seemed a trifle more pointed, and the famous Hapsburg under-lip protruded pale and cruel. In the night she had had nightmares about insurrections. Good Madame Campan wanted to read to her, but Marie Antoinette had declined with a wave of her hand, and was soon lost in thought. She was evidently a prey to one of her frequent attacks of melancholia. Profound stillness reigned in the little white panelled room. Madame Campan hardly dared to breathe.

Even when the sound of an approaching carriage became audible the Queen did not stir. Only fat little Désclaux, Her Majesty's Court Musician and Chamberlain, who was practising a new *ritournelle* on the flute, in the ante-chamber, allowed the instrument to drop and hurried out with a comic display of dignity to receive the visitor. It must certainly be His Majesty, he thought. But the sight of the carriage revealed his mistake. It was an ordinary hired chaise from Paris. Was it perhaps Madame de Polignac after all?

No, it was not Madame de Polignac. He had never before seen the lady who alighted from the carriage, and yet she must certainly be a member of the aristocracy. With a respectful enquiry, the Chamberlain bowed low. "I have a petition for Her Majesty," was the firm reply of the veiled lady. "But Her Majesty does not receive anybody at the Trianon," Désclaux replied, remembering the orders he had been given.

"But my business concerns the Queen most deeply!" The words sounded so definite that it was impossible to doubt them. "I will let Madame Campan know. May I ask Madame's name?"

The stranger then threw back her veil and large blue eyes looked at him with calm dignity. "I cannot speak to anyone except the Queen, and I cannot even give my name to anyone except Her Majesty in person!"

Désclaux shrugged his shoulders and led the lady into a small

ante-chamber, where she was given a seat, and then repaired to Madame Campan.

He stepped cautiously into the little salon, and was taken aback when he saw the Queen. Disturbed in her reverie, she looked angrily up at him. He stammered, "A strange lady, who will not give her name, wishes to speak to Her Majesty on pressing business." The Queen shook her head peevishly.

"Campan!" She uttered the name of her confidante without the slightest trace of anger, and yet it sounded like the crack of a whip. The energetic little ferret-nosed Frenchwoman was out of the room before the Queen could say another word.

"What is it you want, Madam?" the lady-in-waiting enquired, as she gazed in astonishment at the stranger and found that she made a very favourable impression. The answer was gentle but very determined. "You are not the Queen, and I am afraid I can say nothing to you." Madame Campan became uneasy. The woman who stood before her had not the appearance either of a beggar or a lunatic, but to judge from her accent she was a foreigner belonging to some distinguished family, and yet she did not seem to be familiar with the etiquette imposed at every Court.

"I must inform you, Madam, that Her Majesty has instructed me to enquire into the object of your visit." Madame Campan's words were courteous but decided. "Pray assure Her Majesty the Queen of my deep respect, but it is impossible for me to fulfil her request." The stranger's proud reply almost silenced the lady-in-waiting; but remembering that the Queen was suffering from melancholia, a mood in which she was extremely difficult to deal with, she replied in a less conciliatory tone, "Then Her Majesty much regrets that she cannot receive you."

But the stranger continued, "I insist on giving her my message. It is a matter of a conspiracy against Her Majesty." Madame Campan looked into her eyes terrified.

At the same moment the doors leading to the inner apartments were thrown open. Pale and angry, Marie Antoinette

stood in the doorway. The altercation had reached her ears, and the word conspiracy had petrified her. In freezing tones, she said:

"You are very importunate, Madam!" And her large eyes flashed angrily at the stranger. The latter, however, did not appear to be frightened; she merely curtsied and gazed calmly back. "I have come in your Majesty's interests and in the interests of persons whom Your Majesty. . . ." The Queen's look became menacing. "Your name!" The stranger cast a silent glance at the lady-in-waiting. An ironic smile curled Marie Antoinette's lips. "All right, you may go, my dear Campan." But the look that she gave the ferret-nosed lady bade her at least listen at the door. She curtsied low. The Queen then turned peevishly to the stranger and retreated a step. The face of the visitor had suddenly become convulsed with a strange agitation which seemed to communicate itself to the Queen.

"My husband is Count Cagliostro, and I have come to warn Your Majesty of a dreadful calamity, so that you may forestall it before it is too late!"

Marie Antoinette's face grew hard and bitter. "Oh, the Countess Cagliostro in person, the famous friend of Monsieur de Potjomkin? Really, really! I am highly honoured! And you wish to warn us about a conspiracy, which I suppose you have read in the stars? You may spare yourself further details. How much do we owe you?" But the answer came quiet and composed. "Cardinal Rohan is in danger of losing his soul's salvation!" A deep red flush immediately suffused the features of the Hapsburg princess and her face was filled with hatred. "What has that fool to do with me?" Softly came the reply. "In order to pay for the necklace, he has gone over to the Freemasons."

The Queen almost screamed, "What necklace do you mean? What has Rohan to do with it?"

With a look of infinite calm, Lorenza gazed at her. "You

know that better than I do! God alone is listening to us now. Harken to the voice of your own heart!" The Queen sank desperately into one of the plain white enamelled seats which stood along the wall of the simple room, and almost panted, "Go on! And what is this conspiracy you want to tell us about?"

"There is a conspiracy to assail Your Majesty's honour by means of a pamphlet, describing how Your Majesty purchased the necklace. To put a stop to this, Rohan and my husband have gone over to the Freemasons and thus not only the souls of these two, but the souls of all my husband's followers, are doomed to eternal perdition!"

Marie Antoinette pondered a moment. Could it be an attempt at blackmail? Or was the woman mad? Perhaps she was actually a revolutionary! From sheer fright, she assumed a milder tone. "And why do you come to me in this matter, my child? My Minister of Police would know more about it than I do. . . ."

"My husband and Prince Rohan have only been forced to this step, because Your Majesty will not pay for the necklace." And Lorenza cast herself sobbing at the Queen's feet. "Oh, save their souls that have gone astray and are lost! Forgive Rohan, whatever he may have done! Give heed to your own heart! Do not allow him to be estranged from God because of that unhappy necklace!"

Marie Antoinette had retreated slowly step by step and now stood leaning close up to the door. Her fingers were groping for the handle, and she knew that Campan had already turned it from the other side so that the door was open. Her courage immediately rose, and she answered, "Unfortunately I have not the slightest power over the salvation of your Prince's soul!" Lorenza was still on her knees and her words sounded clear and honest. "Return the necklace to the jewellers. Surely it must pain you to wear it when all the time so many souls are being ruined because of it!"

Marie Antoinette cast a withering glance at the weeping woman and replied coldly, "You are mad! I know of no necklace! I believe, Madam, that all you want to do is to get money out of me! Begone, or I will have you arrested!"

Thereupon Lorenza drew forth a paper, "But what about this?"

The Queen rushed quickly towards her and tore the document from her hand. It was an undertaking on the part of the Court Jewellers, Boehmer and Bassenge, not to take any further steps in the matter of the diamond necklace purchased by Her Majesty the Queen of France through the agency of His Eminence the Cardinal Prince Rohan!

Marie Antoinette's face went white as a sheet with agitation. But with surprising presence of mind, she was still able to smile stonily. "And how does Count Cagliostro know about this?"

"Through his friend, Prince Rohan!"

"But who induced Rohan to buy the necklace?"

"Your Majesty the Queen in several letters."

"And where is the necklace now?"

"It was given to Your Majesty, by Madame de la Motte!"

The Queen pressed a hand nervously to her heart and scrutinised the kneeling woman before her. It was in very truth a conspiracy against the Lily of the Bourbons, but the woman who knelt there seemed to be innocent of it.

"I thank you very much, Madam; your information is most valuable." Lorenza took a deep breath and with eyes full of loyalty looked up at the Queen. "Of course I knew it; you are a woman, and you will forgive!"

Outwardly calm and even friendly, the Hapsburg princess replied, "If it sets your mind at rest, my child, I will gladly promise you to let mercy prevail." With the tears streaming down her face, Lorenza continued, "And may I beg Your Majesty to keep my visit a secret? My husband would be angry with me, if he knew that I . . ."

Marie Antoinette was really smiling now. "I will certainly promise you that!"

With a spontaneous movement the Roman woman clasped the knees of the Queen, who drew back, and pressed her hot sweet face for a moment against the cool silk. Saved! God has forgiven me! That was the thought that ran singing through her head. And without another word she got up and hurried out.

The Queen stood still as if she were paralysed. Her cheeks had burning red patches on them. Madame Campan glided in. "Did you hear?" the Queen asked bluntly, still bewildered by the strangeness of what had happened.

"The Cardinal's machinations!" hissed the lady-in-waiting. "He is up to his ears in debt and is having recourse to these knavish tricks in order to get out of his difficulties!"

With flashing eyes the haughty Hapsburg princess rose to her feet. The poisoned seed had taken root! A vision rose in her mind of a Cardinal forging documents. Cold and pale, she exclaimed, "Make haste, Madame Campan! Boehmer and Baron Breteuil must come here immediately! If that scrap of paper is not a forgery, then Rohan's head is not worth a penny! Make haste! Quick please! I want the truth!"

"Not so fast, Benito, and be more careful, you are shaving me most carelessly to-day, *corpo di bacco!* Shaving is not the same thing as playing a Jew's harp! Have you been to the Maison de Strasbourg?"

It was quite early, only just eight o'clock, and yet a very elaborate toilet was being made at the Rue St. Claude, for to-day Cagliostro was to be crowned Primate of the United Order of Freemasons and was to be invested with all their power.

Benito's hand trembled slightly. "Yes, *mæstro*, and things are just exactly as I have described them to you. The Prince, after a stormy interview with the King and Queen, when he was on his way to Mass, which he had to celebrate, was arrested by Baron Breteuil in the Gallerie des Glaces before the whole Court."

Cagliostro gave vent to a deep grunt and brushed a flake of lather from the right hand corner of his mouth. "Go on!"

"In the guardroom he wrote a little note to the Abbé Georgel, and he had to use his red Cardinal's beretta to write it on. . . ."

The Sicilian smiled. "Had to use his beretta to write on! The madman!"

"And then he ordered the officer on duty, who was quite upset at having such an exalted prisoner, to give the note to an estafette, for it to be taken to the Abbé." Benito's eyes eagerly scrutinised Cagliostro's face which was reflected in the dim mirror. But the Master scarcely moved. "Go on! Go on!"

"In the note he requested the Abbé immediately to destroy the red morocco wallet, as well as all documents relating to women, and when his house was searched nothing of the sort was found."

Cagliostro sighed thoughtfully. Surely that was a noble gesture on the part of that blockhead Rohan? Thanks to the precaution, no woman would be compromised. He wondered whether he himself would have acted in a similar way. He sighed once more, and half smiling, half embarrassed, he had to admit to himself that he would certainly have acted very differently. The devil take the lot of them! It was evidently what was known as blue blood that had led the Cardinal to act as he had done. When he was in the direst distress, his first thought had been the honour of the ladies! *Nom d'un chien*, if the women only got to hear of it, Rohan's life would not be worth a moment's purchase, they would make such an idol of him! "Well, go on!"

"Then they took him to the palace, and he was conducted to the Bastille this morning. Apparently he looked very ill." Benito allowed the razor to drop and stared at his master. Was Cagliostro really not in the least concerned, although he had been an intimate friend of Rohan?

Cagliostro appeared to guess his servant's thoughts. "Nothing but machinations on the part of Baron Breteuil. No, Benito, you need have no fear, they will not touch us. That would lead to a European scandal, and would inevitably end in

revolution! From to-day I am the Great Orient of the World, my son! Hundreds of thousands are ready to stake their lives for me." And he puffed himself out. "That is how things stand. Moreover, in case the worst should happen, I have got another nice little plan, which will take their breath away if they should dare to touch me. And now come on, hand me my gala clothes. Do not forget the insignia and the orders and the golden sword!"

Benito hurried out. As on the day before that on which the Cardinal had been arrested, Cagliostro was obsessed by one thought alone—who would possibly have played the part of traitor? Certainly it was the work of a woman. Possibly. . . . Probably it had been Jeanne, from fear of him, because he had dug up Nicole Legaye. The donkey did not guess that five days previously the little Nicole, together with her lover Beausire, had been sent to Belgium, where no Sartines could get hold of them. It was certainly Jeanne, who from foolish cowardice had made an arrangement with Rohan's enemy, Breteuil, in order to get off scot free herself. He smiled gloomily. Poor Rohan! He could no longer be helped, and what was more, Cagliostro had no wish to help him. His first object, Lorenza, he had achieved. His second object, power, would be in his hands in a few hours. Oh, clever Giuseppe!

But where was that rascal with his clothes? He rang furiously for the second time, but no Benito appeared.

No, they would not touch him! He had only come to know about the purchase of the necklace after the event. That could be definitely proved. But that Jeanne was certainly capable of anything. . . . But hang it all, he had yet another little plan which could force the police to respect his sacred person! Was he not of royal descent? Truth to tell, a man was anything he was worthy of. And how they would stare!

But where the devil was that hound of hell? There was nothing he hated more than having to wait. And so for the third time he rang the bell like mad. Nothing stirred! Foam-

ing with rage, he wrenched open the door. A soldier with fixed bayonet stood before him!

Escorted by six policemen with drawn swords, under the command of a cold but extremely polite officer, they were marched over the horribly uneven paving stones of the Boulevard St. Antoine. In front of them, stern and gloomy, loomed the merciless walls of the Bastille.

Cagliostro was wearing the flimsiest indoor garments. Benito had not reappeared, and he had had no alternative but to jump into the first clothes he could lay his hands on. He looked extremely depressed and angry. It was fatal that they should have arrested him precisely that day! To-morrow he would have been Primate! What if the Freemasons were to leave him in the lurch now and vanish with the document signed by him, according to which he undertook that day to give up the leadership of Egyptian Freemasonry and make it form part and parcel of ordinary Freemasonry? They were certainly capable of it! He cursed grimly.

This was certainly Jeanne's work, *santo porco*. The damned police! But they would soon have to repent of it! He had not locked up anything at home, and was already enjoying the thought of the spicy letter of claims he would send in to the authorities for the money and valuables which the police would be sure to have removed in their search. To the great joy of the passers-by and guttersnipes who were looking on, he turned to the officer and roared, "Do you really intend to take us to the Bastille? I have only my slippers on and I cannot walk another inch over these cobble stones. A carriage!"

The officer took no notice but merely looked coldly in front of him.

Lorenza walked lightly with bowed head at Cagliostro's side. Yes, that is what it had come to! But even this disgrace was better than the perdition of thousands of souls! And, after all, the Queen had promised to exercise clemency. In her

hands she clutched a little note the officer had given her. "With regard to her own person a certain exalted lady promised to observe the strictest silence. Would she kindly do likewise?" Yes, that is what she would do, and what she had intended to do! Giuseppe would never know that she. . . . He was quite capable of bringing about far more terrible things!

The gigantic structure of the Bastille was already quite close. Cagliostro was now limping very badly. With a great creaking and clattering the drawbridge fell.

An hour later, the Sicilian was led from his private cell to be cross-examined. While he was following the guard along the icy cold passages of the prison, he noticed an open door in the distance, in front of which a soldier stood hotly discussing something with the occupant of the cell. Filled with curiosity, he looked in, and to his intense astonishment beheld Jeanne, the sweet, ambitious royal wasp of the corrupt blood of the Valois!

With brutal cynicism, he called out to her, "*Bon jour, Madame!* So we are going to sleep under the same roof after all!"

But how Jeanne had changed! She was as white as a sheet and her face was drawn, while her dress was careless not to say slatternly. She sprang at him like a wild beast, and clutching hold of the first object she could seize, a heavy metal candlestick, she flung it at her insulter. It struck not him but the guard. With a loud laugh of satisfaction, the Sicilian strode on and when he had gone some considerable way he could still hear her wild expostulations and piercing shrieks.

Then it could not have been Jeanne! Or was it merely a theatrical display on her part? It sounded quite genuine. But if it was not Jeanne, who could it be? Boehmer? Baudard? Benito? Well, time would show! And as for himself, his innocence would immediately be established when they went into the question of the date on which the necklace was bought. For he had called on Rohan only on the following day. Be-

sides. . . . In any case, he would have his revenge! And he whistled a not very harmonious street ditty.

The turnkey reprimanded him severely. "Whistling is not allowed here!" Cagliostro merely shrugged his shoulders.

A heavy iron door opened noiselessly, and they stepped into a beautifully lighted room. Before a massive writing table sat the Marquis de Launay; close by a clerk was writing fast with a somewhat scratchy quill. At the window, with his face turned towards the new arrival, stood Monsieur de Sartines, the Chief of Police.

The Sicilian bowed scornfully. "Ah! I hardly expected to see nothing but dear old friends here! Are we going to have a rubber, gentlemen? The festival the other day was a great success, was it not? And in that connection, Marquis, your passion for the Queen of the Festival must have disturbed your sleep, I'm afraid, as I accidentally gathered a moment ago. *Bon appetit!*" And laughing uproariously he threw himself into an armchair. "Well, now what does all this colossal stupidity mean?"

With lips sternly compressed, the Chief of Police took stock of him. "This is not an occasion for joking, sir! It is a matter of the theft of a necklace from Messrs. Boehmer and Bassenge, Court Jewellers to Her Majesty. You are charged with having been an accomplice of His Eminence the Cardinal in the theft. Stand up, prisoner! Take down the personal details," he added, turning to the clerk.

At last he was able to avert his face from the dim leaden threat in Cagliostro's eyes, and passing a hand over his brow, he discovered that it was wet.

Cagliostro took a deep breath. His hour had come! And he made all the necessary preparations for a great and bewildering speech.

In a dry businesslike way, the clerk looked up from his papers and after taking a final bite at his goose quill, he said, "Stand up, sir! Your name please!"

Cagliostro jumped up alertly and throwing back his head

and thrusting forward his iron chin, exclaimed with glowing eyes:

“You have dared to lay hands on a person of royal descent! Write it down, sir. Hear, O world! my real name and rank! I am Prince Acharat, son of the King of Trebizond, educated by Althotas, the wisest of men!”

Boulogne Sur Mer

EVER since the previous day, the wealthy old-fashioned town on the stormy Channel had undergone remarkable changes. Along the winding old streets, bands of visitors were walking. The inns and restaurants were packed with fashionable people, and even the private houses were full to overflowing with travellers who had just arrived.

For the last twenty-four hours the demand for oysters, red wine, game and champagne had risen a hundred-fold, and many shops had put up their shutters, as they had sold out. Day and night, the hairdressers held their curling tongs over the heads of beautiful women, who had burst into their establishments like a swarm of beautiful locusts. The natives of the town, however, clasped their hands in petrified astonishment. One would think that His Majesty, the King, together with the whole Court, had come to pay a visit to his faithful city of Boulogne! And yet, after all, it was only a common or garden Count who had brought all this vast throng of people together, a man who had been expelled from the realm, and who had played an exceedingly equivocal part in the scandalous trial which for almost a year had kept the minds of the whole population in a state of perpetual excitement!

This Count Cagliostro made a great display of wealth, and it was said that things had reached a nice pitch at the *Lys Blanc* on the previous night. As soon as the conversations turned on the main section of the illustrious stranger's suite—the women—much whispering and covert giggling was to be heard round the tables of the more respectable bourgeois of the

town. There were real duchesses among them and high-born people. Nobody in Boulogne could make out which of them was a . . . creature, and which was a duchess; for the most disreputable were as distinguished as the noble ladies, while the most distinguished were themselves as attractive as sin itself! The narrow streets were plunged in clouds of sweet scents, the rustle of silk, and mysterious smiles. Boulogne winked its fat little eyes.

The portly host of the famous *Lys Blanc* was particularly excited. As for oysters, game and wine—well, they could easily be procured, and even extra beds for one, two or more persons; they were not a very serious matter. And as for the little amusements for unattached gentlemen—well, after all, they were not living in a seaport town for nothing! But, to turn one of his rooms into a mystic Lodge, *sacré nom de Dieu*, no one had ever asked him to do that before! The floors, walls and ceiling were draped with black muslin, adorned with silver stars, and a throne with a blood-red canopy was erected at the end of it. Never had he sweated so much in his life, and in addition to everything else, his conscience was now troubling him. For this Black Lodge was a very suspicious affair, and as for what took place inside it—that certainly did not bear inspection! There was one consolation . . . they drank a tremendous deal, these strangers, and paid well, and on the following day the boat in which Count Cagliostro proposed to go to England was going to set sail. Then it would all be over. So why not let them do exactly as they pleased?

Blinking nervously, Benito strode out of the hotel, looked insolently at the sun, gave the exceedingly respectable host a friendly slap on the shoulder, and sauntered at a leisurely pace into the comfortable little coffee house that stood across the street, a little way off. Taking a seat at a marble table beneath a decorative palm, he ordered some strong coffee and some genuine rum and dreamily abandoned himself to his meditations.

Santo porco, what a year it had been, this year of the trial!

Madonna! All of them had had to attend it—Rohan, Jeanne, Cagliostro, Lorenza, Rétaux, Nicole Legaye, the whole lot, not only the leading characters, but the supers as well, the Swiss Planta, that little bedroom puss Rosalie, the guardsman Beau-sire, and also that little Mademoiselle de la Tour, born in the so-called Sign of Capricornus. The whole lot had gone to the Bastille and the clergy alone had been spared—Abbé Georgel and the Minim Brother, Father Loth, and . . . Benito! He smiled. On the day when his master had been arrested, he had noticed the police officers in front of the house in good time, and had simply disappeared.

The coffee came and was bad. The young Neapolitan had never been able to stand these French people, who did not even know how to make coffee. Even his master, whom he had idolised in the past, had developed under their influence into a smug contented bourgeois, who was not ashamed to appear before the whole world as a thoroughly happily married man with his wife. After a brilliant début, he had been paralysed and petrified, and had sunk into a bourgeois! Benito could no longer stay in such a country; and, as for England, that desert of roast beef and plum pudding, in no circumstances whatever would he go there!

Suddenly he looked up bewildered, and with that sixth sense possessed by men with a guilty conscience, and by pretty women eager to please, he felt that for the last few minutes he had been watched; and discovered that the person in question was sitting behind him in the coffee house and was the gentleman near the second column.

Whereupon he strolled carelessly further into the coffee house and stood still by a small billiard table. As he passed, he glanced at the stranger, but all he could recognise was a friendly little bald patch which seemed familiar to him. But he was a trained observer, and even a bald patch might be a sufficient means of identification.

He must keep his ears open now! It was evident that his master was being followed, and with a certain definite object.

But whoever they were and whatever they wanted, he did not care. No Bastille threatened him!

When he returned to his place there was a note lying on the table. He unfolded it, and a golden louis rang on the marble slab. In the note was written, "If you want nine more of these little brothers, then follow me."

The town had lain behind him for some time. The sky was a steely blue, and the sun was burning pitilessly. Benito, already grumbling, was bathed in perspiration, when the small carefully-groomed stranger, in spite of his corpulence, lightly scaled a sand dune. On reaching the top he flung himself into the sharp-pointed coarse grass in the shade of a pine tree. Two minutes later Benito was standing at his side.

Baudard de St. James, the Treasurer of the Navy, with a friendly and playful wave of his plump well-manicured hand, motioned to him to sit down. He was apparently completely absorbed in contemplation of the calm deep blue sea, which seemed to have fallen asleep in the heat of the afternoon sun. With kindly and quite unaffected carelessness he observed, "It is a hot day. . . ."

Benito sat a few paces away in the glorious sunshine. "Not too hot for ten louis!"

Baudard turned his head benevolently towards the Neapolitan with slits for eyes. "You seem to be a bright lad." Benito immediately assumed an air of abysmal stupidity and with a foolish grin replied, "Also to the tune of ten louis!"

Without heeding him Baudard, tidy, serene and harmless as ever, let the white sand run through his fingers. "What is Cagliostro doing?"

Benito frowned and gazed into the distance. Far away, on the blue horizon, there hovered the tiny dove-grey silhouette of a sailing vessel. "The Count is well satisfied with life."

Baudard's eyes followed the boy's. "And what about you?" Benito half closed his eyes and gazed intently at the diaphanous form of the ship in the distance. "It is sailing to England. What do I want to do? I am going to ask to be set free!"

Baudard now sat up and a keen look entered his kindly eyes. Drawing forth his silk purse, which was full to overflowing, he counted out nine gold pieces and laid them on the sand and placed the pleasantly clinking purse beside them. But Benito did not turn round and made no attempt to change his expression of stupidity and indifference. Inquisitiveness and readiness to serve were notoriously destructive of good prices!

A faint breeze brought them a refreshing touch of salt from the sea, and the grass rustled as it blew across. Faint in the distance they could hear the organ of the ocean gently rolling. Baudard's cheerful voice interrupted the short silence. "So you don't want to go with them to England?"

Benito shrugged his shoulders peevishly. "I have been there once already."

"Quite right! But on that occasion there was the little affair of Mrs. Fry's necklace. Your master seems to have a weakness for necklaces!"

The Neapolitan smiled. "You seem to know everything, sir!" He felt that Baudard was taking stock of him and immediately assumed a grieved and dignified air. "But you should not say that, *Excelenza*, for on both occasions my master was innocent, and was set at liberty."

Baudard gave him a sidelong glance. "Even acquittals may tell a tale, my dear boy!"

The purse rang with the sweet clink of gold. "Pick up your nine gold pieces, and attend to what I am going to tell you. Is there a Lodge this evening?"—"Yes, sir!"—"And in his address your master is going to reveal his aims?"—"I believe so, sir!"—"Is there any means of attending the Lodge without being seen?"—"No, sir! The supervision is too strict."—"Then you must find a way of getting over it."—"Impossible, sir!"

"For ten louis!"—"Quite impossible!"—"Twenty!"—"It can't be done!"—"Twenty-five!"—"Perhaps if the person in question disguised himself as a servant. . . ."—"Impossible! Thirty!"—"Shaving, paint and wigs have often been found

quite useful.”—“Anything of the kind is out of the question. Features too pronounced! Fifty! And now *basta!*”

“When can I have the money!”—“Now!” And Baudard took a bank note from his pocket. Benito stood up, put it in his pocket and bowed courteously. “If Monsieur Baudard had said fifty at once I should not have been obliged to hesitate so long. I am at your disposal. My bedroom is next door to the hall in which the Lodge is held and there is a glass window in the door. At what time may I expect Senor Ximenez?”

For the first time in his life Baudard lost his equanimity. Ximenez? He had said Ximenez! Verily, the servant was worthy of his master!

Benito bowed and went off. He waddled.

Sacré nom de Dieu! It would not be a bad thing to keep an eye on that youth and secure his services! Baudard’s eyes rested thoughtfully on the broad sparkling blue surface of the sea, whose breath rose and fell as it did on the first day of creation. The breeze grew fresher. The organ of the ocean swelled to a thundering roar. But Baudard still lay carelessly stretched in the shade and let the fine sand run through his plump and well-kept fingers.

The poorly furnished apartment connecting the two rooms occupied by Cagliostro and the two occupied by his wife, was only called a salon because it contained no bed. It was a small cold room and was but dimly lighted by a window that looked out on to the harbour. It contained a shabby and bumpy gilt couch upholstered in worn out dark red velvet, a shaky baroque table, the top of which was cracked and two uncomfortable armchairs. A mirror which had long ceased to reflect anything and a portrait of a man in armour wearing a crown on his head and holding a sceptre with an arm that was much too long, completed the contents of the room.

During the period of his imprisonment the Sicilian had grown very much fatter. His complexion had become more pasty, his eyes were dim and had loose bags beneath them and a network of crow’s feet in the corners, while in his coarse wiry black

hair dirty yellowy-grey wisps gleamed here and there—a sign of old age. His long solitude within the terrible walls of the Bastille, surrounded by eternal silence and calumniating blackness had undermined his once untiring bodily vigour.

Lorenza's sweet childish face had grown strangely mature. Indeed it was worse than mature. Cosmetics had taken the place of beauty unadorned, and the proud Roman woman who had once despised these deceitful aids to charm, was now as highly painted and powdered as the gay ladies whom she had once regarded with scorn. Figure pads enhanced the specious charm of her figure and her tiny fingers were covered with rows of glittering rings. Her mouth had become cold and haughty and there was an expression of restlessness, bitterness and disappointment in her deep blue eyes.

Clad in a bright dressing gown of flaming orange with silver trimming and lace, Cagliostro throned it picturesquely on the somewhat dilapidated couch. He threw a letter he had just read on to the table and laughed. Lorenza was in a bright green muslin dress, trimmed with fine ivory-coloured lace. She stood before him breathing heavily and in a strange voice enquired, "Well, what is the Cardinal writing to you about?"

"His letter is full of complaints. He has had to resign his posts and emoluments, and has been sent to the most insignificant of his Abbés, the refuge for lost sheep. He says that he did not expect to be acquitted so brilliantly and then within twenty-four hours to be banished by the King."

Lorenza smiled coldly. "I cannot understand why Parliament acquitted him entirely. Even if he had only been the victim of fraud—when he met Nicole Legaye in the Park of Versailles, he really believed that it was the Queen with whom he was having this gallant tryst. And was that not in a sense *lèse majesté*?"

Cagliostro good-humouredly mixed himself a glass of champagne and brandy. "Certainly, but that was just what pleased Parliament. It gave them a chance of having a hit at the Queen! The Queen will soon come to the end of her tether.

In the old days she was only accused of being frivolous; but now they suspect her of being an adulteress, you see, and that will mean the downfall of the Bourbons."

Somewhat too innocently, though with a certain timidity, Lorenza enquired, "But why did Parliament want to have a hit at the Queen?" Pale with rage, the Sicilian thrust out his iron chin. "Bribery! The Freemasons! Baudard has the whole of Parliament in his pocket, as most of the members are up to their ears in debt to him. It was only too obvious that whenever I began to speak about the machinations of the Freemasons, I was quickly shut up and told that the subject had nothing to do with the questions at issue at the trial. Oh, how that swine Baudard took me in! He not only cheated me, he betrayed me! I am certain it was he who told the Queen, so that the whole scandal should be revealed. He has robbed me of my fortune. But just you wait a bit! The day of reckoning is coming!" Lorenza remained motionless where she stood, gazing in front of her, and then she said gently but emphatically, "I was not worth the price. . . ."

He looked up at her with a self-complacent air and whistled discordantly.

Softly she continued, "I cannot understand why Baudard, who did all he could to win you, suddenly ceased to trouble about you altogether."

Cagliostro shrugged his shoulders. "Cowardice! He is frightened of me and feels he cannot bear me to look at him any longer. And he is right! He would receive the chastisement from me which as a dirty traitor he so richly deserves." His rage was mere wind, and his words rattled like a storm in a tea-cup, artificial and bombastic. Lorenza smiled a wan smile.

"Are you so absolutely certain that it was Baudard who betrayed you?" She looked into his eyes.

He blustered angrily. "He or Ximenez; it was certainly one of those two rogues. For who else knew about the business? Who else could have got the Queen's ear? Perhaps Rohan himself? Or even you? Don't make me laugh!"

There was a pause. Lorenza once more strode restlessly up and down the room. Then he added gloomily, "The proof that it must have been a Freemason is to be found in the fact that during the whole of the trial the name of the informer was never once mentioned. It was said that the Boehmers were seized with fear and ran and threw themselves at the Queen's feet. Ridiculous! Why, the Boehmers had to dance to the tune that Baudard called. Baudard and nobody else was the traitor!"

Lorenza shrugged her shoulders, and stepping up to the window, looked out on to the harbour. The flags shone brightly and the white sails bulged. A great frigate had just been unloaded and crowds of inquisitive people were thronging round the bales and crates. It was a cheerful happy sight!

Cagliostro sprawled on the couch and gazed longingly at the graceful form in the window. Fresh and sharp was the fragrance of salt that blew in on the cheerful breeze, accompanied by the soft murmur of the sea and the hollow thunder of the breakers. Had he not just heard a heavy gentle sigh? Lorenza had glided silently from the room.

The rays of the setting sun were shedding a crimson glow into the dusk of the room when Benito crept cautiously in at the door. Cagliostro stretched himself peevishly. All his limbs were aching from lying on the uncomfortable couch. "*Corpo di bacco*, you young rascal! Where have you been all this time?"

"I have been making enquiries about a conveyance, *mæstro*."

"Please do not interfere with things that do not concern you! I booked berths on the *Good Hope* yesterday." Drawing himself up stiffly in an attempt to maintain a proper reserve, the servant replied, "Not for me, sir!"

Cagliostro looked up in astonishment, "What do you mean by that?" Benito now summoned up all his courage. "I took the liberty of booking a seat in the coach which goes to Châlons sur Marne."

The Sicilian jumped to his feet and rushed at the youth. "And does that mean that you want to leave me?"

"Yes, sir," Benito replied, looking askance at him. Frenzied with rage, Cagliostro struck out right and left. But the sly youth had taken refuge in time behind an armchair. "We live in a state which is governed by law, sir!" he said in threatening tones to his master, though he was almost shrieking with fright. The Sicilian expectorated and returned to the couch, and after sitting gloomily lost in thought for a while, he began to glower at the youth from beneath his frowning brows. "I understand! The rats are leaving the ship! All right; go!"

Benito had expected anything but this. He could not meet this sullen melancholy, and glided cautiously and shyly forth from behind the chair. "There is no hurry about my ten months arrears of salary, sir. You can send it on to me some time in Naples. . . ."

Cagliostro did not answer, but sat there darkly brooding. Stammering, Benito continued, "I know quite well how the Paris police have robbed you, sir, and so I can understand that at the present moment you are rather short of money. . . ." Cagliostro signed to him gloomily to stop. "What do you propose to do in Naples?"

Benito giggled and his eyes almost closed up. "I am only going to open a little tavern on the harbour, *mæstro*. I am going to call it *The Two Hemispheres*. It is going to be very jolly." Cagliostro looked at him half dreamily and half benevolently. "You have learnt something in my service. Perhaps . . . if all else fails, I might come to you some day in Naples. . . ."

"Splendid!" cried the little servant. "I could easily do with a partner like you!"

"Partner!" The Master was now bursting with rage. "Partner? Count Cagliostro will have nobody as partner, do you understand? He will conquer the world in single-handed greatness, or perish in the attempt. Go to the devil, you rat! Here

are your ten gold pieces. Now be off! To-morrow I shall engage a Duke as my servant!"

The money was actually aimed at the Neapolitan's head, but with great acrobatic skill he caught most of it in its flight, and the rest fell ringing on to the floor. In a flash it was in his pocket. In the twilight the boy was able to slip out of the room unobserved, and the door closed silently behind him as if no Benito had ever been in the room.

Cagliostro stared gloomily at the door and grunted. "Rat! . . ." And then Lorenza came into the room bearing a light.

She was dressed in purple velvet trimmed with white silk lace. The little ribbon in her hair, her blood-red painted lips set in the ivory of her lovely face, shone in the flickering candle-light like a strange fire through the sordid room. She laid a hand on Cagliostro's shoulder. "The Lodge will open in half an hour. You must get ready."

The Great Orient sat up slowly, and with a strangely gentle laugh, he said, "A little sailors' tavern in Naples. . . . The rats are leaving the ship!"

In a flash Lorenza understood. She had heard the voices. "Benito?"

The fat little man nodded sadly. "He is the first. I am wondering who will be the next."

"I will stay with you Alessandro. From to-day I will take Benito's place and help you." She had set the candle on the table so that her face lay in shadow. He put his arm about her waist and laid his great square head against her breast. Calmly she stroked his dishevelled hair.

The walls draped with black velvet, the silver stars and the Hebrew signs, the throne set on carpets spread on the dais beneath the gold brocade canopy, the burning candles grouped in nines, the mystic ampulla with its macaberesque violet light, the crossed swords of the brethren forming a pergola under which the Chosen of the Lord was to walk to his exalted seat, the fragrance of soothing scents which rose from copper bowls,

filled the senses of the assembly with solemn ecstasy. The gleam of the crystal flasks, in which the "Dove" was to see strange visions, the dazzling sword of the Great Coft swinging through the air describing the magic circle and mystic signs, the monotonous though piercing voice of the Master as he chanted his thundering appeals to demons and archangels and the soft sighing breath of the sleeper who was about to speak and answer according to his will—once again all these things did not fail of their effect.

It was an illustrious assembly. The Grand Master had excused the Brothers and Sisters the necessity of attending the Lodge in Freemason dress, and the congregation now presented a truly amazing display of the latest fashions.

Lorenza sat close by Cagliostro in an armchair upholstered in silver brocade. Pale and with an expression of stony hardness, she leant her head against the back of her chair and kept her eyes half closed, with a look of deep disdain. Her lips were glowing and dark shadows lay about her eyes.

A silver bell tinkled feebly nine times. Several Brothers immediately dashed forward with drawn swords and put out all the candles with the exception of the two candelabra on either side of the throne, which alone remained burning. Their warm light fell on the Great Coft, who was the central figure in the great room, which was heavy with the fragrant fumes of incense, and filled with a deep violet glow like twilight.

Suddenly the Master rose. As though it worked on a hinge, his iron chin was thrust forward, and with the impetuosity and unexpectedness which characterised all his actions, he began to speak. A wild avalanche of words poured upon the ears of the listeners, with a loud grating, moaning, mysterious howling, deep roaring and the whole range of every kind of sound, like the fearsome chaos in which we are told there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Brothers and sisters, for the last time while the sun still sheds its rays upon the present rulers of France, I stand before

you! Fare you well! I came to bestow a gift upon you; I leave you an exile sent forth to banishment!"

A murmur went through the audience, but the voice rose in imploring cadence, while his hands imposed his will upon the assembly. "As poor as the holy St. Francis, I am leaving this country, and have renounced the riches, the accumulation of which is mere child's play to me! Just ask Prince Rohan who it was that turned lead into pure gold before his very eyes! This blessing too I wished to bestow upon your country, my country—France! But who was it that burst open my cupboards and stole my recipe for the preparation of *materia prima*? I accuse Sartines, Chief of Police, and the Marquis de Launay, the Governor of the Bastille, of robbery!"

At these words Cagliostro was suddenly overcome with rage at the recollection of the injury that had been done to him. His attitude of noble martyr was laid aside and he burst into a violent recital of figures. Had not over a hundred thousand francs worth of his property been damaged, or removed? Gold, diamonds, jewels, had been stolen! And by whom? By the police! From his writing desk they had taken fifteen rolls of fifty doubloons apiece, each sealed with his own seal. Furthermore, one thousand two hundred and thirty-three Venetian and Roman sequins, a roll of four and twenty Spanish pistoles, forty-seven one-thousand franc bank notes from the Discount Bank and, moreover, papers of the highest importance which were in his green wallet and were of incalculable worth—the whole lot had gone, the whole lot had been stolen! Perhaps it was asking too much—and here Cagliostro interrupted his description of the details with an inimitable wave of his hand, as if with proud disdain he were setting aside the question of his own losses—perhaps it was asking too much of His Majesty's Government to give him the paltry sum of one hundred thousand francs in aid of the poor prisoners who were still languishing in the Bastille?

An outburst of frenzied applause rang through the hall. A heroic gesture forced the assembly to be silent. "Oh citizens

of France, Oh country of the noble and the free, never will it be forgotten how splendidly you sympathised with the fate of a stranger in your midst! In spite of every precaution, when the police liberated me a fortnight ago at dead of night from my dank dungeon, ten thousand of the people of Paris were waiting in front of my outlawed and plundered house to render me enthusiastic homage. Never shall I forget the impression this made upon me! And when, on the following day, your King promulgated his cruel order banishing me from the realm, your faith in me was increased a thousandfold at the news, and your sense of justice too, my brethren! Ten thousand people were ready to resist the royal violence by force of arms rather than lose me. Their warm and generous hearts offered me the sovereignty! I refused! What is sovereignty to me? To Cagliostro that would mean a throne on earth. But the hour of golden thrones and of tyrants is past and gone, and the day has come when we must needs erect the imperishable throne of the human spirit!"

Once more a loud burst of applause echoed through the hall. But in a moment it stopped, for the Great Cofit was weeping. "Let my deeds speak for themselves! Strassburg, Bordeaux, Lyons and Paris, you will bear witness for me before the whole world! But in spite of all, my enemies, loathsome generation of scorpions, have gained the upper hand. What had I done to Baron Breteuil? What did he charge me with? He charged me with having been loved by Cardinal Rohan and with not having deserted my friend when through no fault of his own he was in dire distress. He charged me with being a seeker after Truth, and of having proclaimed and defended it; he charged me with lightening the sufferings of unhappy mankind with alms, medicines and advice—such were my dreadful crimes!"

The courtiers bowed their heads in shame. They never heard such things bellowed forth in France before! With a great roar, the speaker continued his indictment. "Set my doubts at rest! The King has certainly expelled me from the realm, yet he has not hearkened to my defence! Are all judgments passed

thus in France? If so, I pity you! What! Are your persons and your goods and chattels at the mercy of Breteuil's favour or disfavour? Is he to be allowed to mislead the King with impunity? Is he to be allowed suddenly to pounce on innocent people with slanderous accusations that they are not given a chance of refuting? Is he, by the hands of his executioner's assistants, who like their master thirst for blood, to carry out his deeds of infamy and hurl innocent folk into dungeons and deliver up their houses to be plundered?"

His speech now became little more than an hysterical shriek. And, the next moment the voice of the suffering friend of man was changed, and dropped to a gruesome and mysterious whisper. "Are all your dungeons like those of the Bastille, full of shame and insolence, unblushing lies and hypocritical pity? For the most terrible cruelty, the bloodiest injustice and the most agonising death reign in this hall of spectres. And there also ever-lasting silence sits enthroned, whose roar is louder than the thunder of the Last Trump. For half a year and more was I immersed in this cold and clammy darkness, and in the silence of the damned. But others have been lingering there for decades, men who were long since thought to be dead, all too wretched because they are not dead, dragging out their wretched existence in this slough of Tartarus, into which no ray of light ever shines or only just such a glimmer as to show them the impenetrable darkness that envelopes them on every side. Verily I say unto you, there is no crime so monstrous that it is not expiated a thousandfold by a few months in the Bastille!"

A shudder passed through the assembly! Cagliostro's great dimly glowing eyes swept the company and each one of them felt as if the Master was looking at him and at him alone. The lonely voice above them swelled louder and louder and at last poured forth in an avalanche, like a mighty organ of offended humanity. "People of France, you have all you want to be happy—a fruitful soil, a mild climate, friendly hearts, and bright spirits! But you lack just one thing, my friends, just

one trifling insignificant thing—the right to lay your heads in peace upon your pillows even when you know your consciences are clear. A cruel shadow hovers over you day and night. So pluck up courage, and drive that shadow away. Support your Parliament, which is striving to bring about this overthrow, so rich in blessing! Down with the tyrants!”

The rapture of the seer had entered his eyes, which were fixed in a concentrated gaze on far distant heights. He seemed to be convulsed by the grip of the wildest emotion.

“Hearken to what He Who Is tells you through my lips. I see you overthrowing the Bastille and making the site whereon it stood a public promenade. I see the dawn of the day when your people will rise up and break the rule of the despot; I see streams of blood in which the present tyranny will go down to pave the way to a new freedom. I see a great ruler ruling gloriously over your fair land. On his head gleams the bright crown of Emperor of the world! Freedom marches forward! I see! I see! . . .”

They shrieked, they raved in a frenzy of wild ecstasy. With prolonged shouts and cheers the people of France acclaimed the hero. Once more the candles were lighted, and the room became a blaze of light. Sunk back in dignified exhaustion, the Master received their ovations on the throne. He grew more and more inflated and assumed an ever more majestic pose. It was a wonderful spectacle. In the noise and uproar about him it was impossible to hear anything distinctly. Yet in the midst of the raving crowd one note sounded like a belated warning from the elements, a supernatural chorus of infinity.

Outside, in the dark blue starlit summer night, the timeless waves of the Atlantic murmured on the shore, and the breakers thundered and surged softly back, like the mighty voice of God echoing and re-echoing through the staggering onward march of the deaf heart of time!

It was midnight. But why did the Master still sit disconsolately in his shirt sleeves, unable to bring himself to pull off

his sweat-sodden shirt and the fine bulging silk stockings from his muscular hairy legs?

He gazed peevishly in front of him. In a few hours the ship that was to take him to England would put to sea. What would the future bring?

Ever since he had been at liberty he had been expecting the arrival of an emissary from the Freemasons to renew the connection between them that had been broken off. But no such messenger appeared. Baudard and Ximenez, having swindled him of his Egyptian Freemasonry, wanted to have nothing further to do with him, now that their knavish trick had succeeded. He gnawed his finger nails angrily. It was all over now with his grand schemes. The dream of two million pounds a year was over. . . .

London! . . . He dreaded it somewhat. He had enemies in London. But where had he not enemies? Leipsic, Königsberg, Mitau, St. Petersburg, Warsaw, and so on. . . . Palermo, Naples, Venice, Barcelona, Lisbon. . . . His enemies were everywhere. Everywhere there were police, who even to-day were still trying to lay hands on him; while incidentally, since he had been in the Bastille, he had had his fill of prisons!

Oh those damnable Freemasons! And yet, in spite of everything, he could not help suddenly bursting out into a laugh. They were clever fellows! They had taken him in very neatly! Why had he not been more careful?

A sneeze close by suddenly called him to his senses. From the rickety wardrobe near him a familiar harsh voice grated on his ear. "Damned uncomfortable lair this!"

The fat little man jumped up as if he had been stung by a tarantula. Hosannah! There they were! He seized his sword and assumed a pose. It is true that in his haste, and unaccustomed as he was to fighting, he forgot to draw the blade from its sheath.

The wardrobe seemed suddenly to have become alive as the tall thin sallow man emerged from it. He blinked, stretched his limbs, gave one more hearty sneeze, carefully dusted his myster-

ious black clothes, and thereupon with pedantic ease sat down on a stool near the bed and crossed his legs.

"Good evening! Just put that skewer away! I am disappointed to see you welcome an old comrade in such a war-like attitude!" And he looked at Cagliostro reproachfully.

"Why did you want to get into my wardrobe at such a late hour? To murder me?"

The man in black smiled indulgently. "A little joke on my part. . . . You must surely know by now that I have a weakness for mysterious appearances."

With a smile of comprehension, Cagliostro allowed his sword to fall. "I don't believe a word you are saying, Ximenez. But so be it!" He tried to unfasten his shirt. But the Spaniard interrupted him scornfully. "If you don't mind I should like to have a little chat with you first."

Not a muscle of his face betrayed how fast Cagliostro's heart was beating, and smothering an incipient yawn he looked calmly at his belated guest. "Perhaps to-morrow morning," he suggested. But the Spaniard was of a different opinion. "I have brought a dozen bottles of the old Tokay which you liked so much at our headquarters near Strassburg." His voice sounded friendly, almost ingratiating.

In bored tones the Great Orient, who was half undressed, replied, "Very thoughtful of you I'm sure. But you will surely allow me to undress and get into bed!"

The figure in black bowed his consent, then, springing to his feet, opened the parcel with methodical gravity. He uncorked a bottle and conjured two great silver tankards into existence. Meanwhile, the Sicilian had undressed and got into bed, and as usual in that situation, looked just like a great wild badly-behaved schoolboy.

Ximenez resumed his seat on the stool near the bed. With the inimitable majesty of a Hidalgo of ancient lineage he raised the tankard and gravely drank Cagliostro's health. "To Prince Acharat's health!" The fat magician made a grimace. "I

say, drop that, Ximenez! No jokes! That was only meant for our credulous friends. When one is in a fix, as I was in the Bastille, and is being examined by judges who do not believe in real immortality, one has to make up these pretty little fairy tales, and that is why I called myself Prince Acharat of Trebizond—where is Trebizond by the way?—and said that I was descended from the famous Frankish King, Charles Martel.” So saying he pushed his empty tankard towards Ximenez.

With lofty gravity the Spaniard filled it. “And what has happened about the money that they have stolen from you? Have you really no more money?”

Cagliostro laughed so much that his belly shook. “So that was the reason why Benito’s room was bolted!”

“Quite true,” rejoined the Spaniard. “It was a friendly arrangement between Monsieur de St. James and your valet.” The fat little man’s face immediately clouded over. “Baudard is a rogue! It was he who betrayed the whole affair of the necklace!” The Spaniard made a gesture of protest. “Oh, oh, those are hard words! You are mistaken, Balsamo! Monsieur de St. James is a very good friend to you.” The Sicilian sat up angrily in bed and grunted. “Well then it was you who played the traitor.”

With a kindly show of indignation Ximenez shook his head. “But, my dear sir, what do you take me for? No Spaniard ever betrays a friend! The affair was just as much a surprise to us as it was to you, for on the day on which you were arrested, you were to have been proclaimed Primate with all due pomp and ceremony.”

Cagliostro stared at him without understanding, and thoughtfully emptied his tankard. “Then it could only have been Jeanne” he said, suddenly growing hard.

As he opened another bottle, Ximenez chuckled. “The wine is to your taste, it seems. But how inquisitive you are, my dear friend. Patience! We shall have to discuss this matter further. You have just mentioned the name of the Countess

de la Motte. Do you know that the day before yesterday that lady was brought to punishment?"

The Sicilian's eyes sparkled. "And she deserved it!" Sadly the Spaniard shook his head. "Yes, and no! They have been very hard on her! And she behaved like a mad woman, all her clothes, even her chemise, had to be torn from her body. Incidentally, she has a very beautiful little body, very appetising! I congratulate you! And in this somewhat indecent condition she was horse-whipped. When they were preparing to brand the ominous V on her shoulder, she was lying on her belly at the foot of the stairs. It was an extraordinary sight, I can tell you! The crowd was literally yelling. The first V was very well marked, but as she rolled about so foolishly and bit the hangman in the neck through his thick doublet so as to draw blood, the second V came in the wrong place, and was branded on her breast. And now this beautiful child has been imprisoned for life in the Salpêtrière!" And Ximenez complacently took a deep draught of wine.

Full of genuine good cheer, Cagliostro had listened to the dreadful story. He rubbed his hands contentedly. "A jolly good piece of work!"

With a cunning look Ximenez shook his thin finger at him. "You incorrigible fellow! Is that all the thanks you return for such charming voluptuous hours?" But this time his good cheer would not desert him. Cagliostro picked his teeth viciously. "Tell me why you were so anxious to hear me speak at the Lodge this evening?" he asked, and covertly watched the expression in his companion's eyes.

Ximenez gave a careless shrug of his shoulders. "Your speech was really excellent. But you are mistaken with regard to the Paris mob. Do you really think that the thousands who paid homage to you in Paris and were eager to take up arms against the King's decree, did so for your sake, for the sake of Count Cagliostro? Or do you really believe that the five thousand people who followed you here, to Boulogne-sur-Mer, came after Count Cagliostro? You are wrong, my friend! All this has

nothing to do with Count Cagliostro! It is the storm of the revolution which is gathering and of which you are supposed to be the harbinger. So it is to our work that this homage is being paid. And what about your prophecies, Balsamo? Oh, yes, to the uninitiated they may at first sight seem astounding! But acknowledge quietly to me, my friend, that all your forecasts were but a watery edition of what we Freemasons have been preparing. All of it, my dear boy, except your famous Emperor. I trust you did not refer to yourself in that connection. We have no use for him, but I admit that his appearance is not impossible. But let him come, your glorious Emperor, and we shall see how long he will be able to stand up against us!" And the Spaniard's piercing eyes grew hard.

Cagliostro lay peacefully in his bed, and listened, rolling his eyes like a child. Then emptying another tankard, he smacked his lips contentedly. "Very good! And what about Rome?"

The corners of the Spaniard's wicked mouth curled. "There again one sees what a child you are! What should we be if Rome were not there? The best knife will become blunt if it has not a grindstone. Rome is indispensable to us! In the resistance which Rome offers to us, we harden and develop our powers. It is our fight with Rome which has made us a world power. For we have disseminated discontent, and thereupon, with a grandiose gesture, have played the part of humanitarians to the discontented. For we are really humanitarians! Are we not moved by a true spirit of love for humanity? We are the party of the suppressed, of the oppressed, of upheaval, of social freedom—we, we! What is Rome to us?"

Much amused, Cagliostro blinked and allowed the torrent of words to pour over him. The Tokay was good and why should he not allow the Spaniard to have the pleasure of unburdening his heart for once? There were all sorts of things to be learnt from it. . . . With the humility expected of the poor sinner, he took up the conversation as soon as his companion stopped. "Ah, woe unto me! You are giving me a good scold-

ing to-day, Ximenez! So I have been backing the wrong horse, in trying to bring about a union between Rome and the Freemasons!"

At last the long pent-up force of the Spaniard's bitter solitude boiled over. "The hour for frankness has arrived!" he hissed. "Let us talk with our gloves off! Backing the wrong horse? Yes, Balsamo, that is what you have been doing! Enamoured of your own fleeting illusions, you went out of your way to let the chances that were offered to you slip through your fingers—nay, you had not the courage to seize them! Swindling is only power, my dear friend, when it is other people who allow themselves to be swindled! A fortnight ago in Paris you could have overthrown the King and ascended the throne of the Bourbons yourself. What does it matter that it was only a mistake on the part of the mob? A mob that makes mistakes invariably converts them into acts of wisdom automatically as time goes by. But what did you do? Wrapped about in a shabby toga of equivocation, you hastened to obey the fat King's command, and fled, first to Passy, and then to Boulogne. To-morrow you will pusillanimously take refuge in England. For in Paris blood might have flowed—and that is what you are frightened of. Cast in the mould from which rulers are made, you are constantly allowing yourself to be guided by the instincts of the petty tradesman, and what is even worse, by the ambition of a fourth-rate poet, wallowing in bourgeois sensationalism! You are a coward, my friend, too cowardly to be a great leader, but also too cowardly to be a smug law-abiding citizen, too cowardly, in fact, to have the courage of cowardice; too cowardly to turn your other great gifts to account in founding your greatness upon this weakness. You are the most admirable instrument of your own fundamental indolence. Maybe one day you will be our enemy and attack us. But we no longer fear you, Balsamo! When you stood before your judges and told them your oriental fairytales, in the hope that they would respectfully set you free, not only Parliament laughed, you great Prince of Trebizond, but

all Paris laughed—nay, the whole world laughed. And no man can survive ridicule for long. So confess that you are beaten as soon as we choose!”

It was extraordinarily refreshing to hear these plain, beautiful, and unvarnished home-truths rolling one after the other from the mouth of a man who was a barely disguised opponent. With a vague smile Cagliostro admitted that in many respects his visitor was right. But there were many things which this fanatic could not understand. Was he really nothing more than the instrument of his own ineptitude? Was he not rather the brilliant instrument of the ineptitude of his Age? He grinned broadly. It was precisely because this was so and because he knew the soap bubbles of his age and cheerfully allowed them to soar above his head, that he was superior to his Age, and for the same reason, superior also to Ximenez. For, after all, he too could make politics, his own politics, of course. He laughed aloud. “Frankness deserves frankness! What do you think of Swedenborg?”

But Ximenez would not be drawn out. “You seem to have been preparing for your performance in London. But you are mistaken if you think that the followers of Swedenborg are either rich or numerous. Lord Gordon—make a note of the name—is the only man whom you will be able to bleed a little to the tune of a few hundred pounds. But what is that to you?”

Cagliostro snorted faintly. “The London Lodges think a good deal of the mystic Swedenborg. What if one were to serve up the Egyptian dish with a little Swedenborgian other-world sauce?” Ximenez looked thoughtfully in front of him. The Sicilian was the sort of man who could drive even the people of London mad. Precautionary measures would have to be taken.

He drew his stool closer and laid his moist cold hand on the shoulder of the man who was lying in bed so happy. “We have taken the liberty of stealing a march on you. A London lawyer of the name of Reynolds has collected a certain amount

of evidence against you. This Reynolds is a friend of a certain Morand, an ambitious quill driver, who is editor of the *Courier de l'Europe*, and is only waiting to find some sensation to make himself known all over Europe." The Spaniard paused significantly.

Cagliostro grinned all over his face. "Pooh! a scribbler!" "Another mistake on your part, Balsamo. You undervalue this growing power. The speeding up of everything which is the tendency of our Age, will convert newspapers into a force the significance of which we cannot now foresee. Morand prints something—and thousands of readers believe it. No later than to-morrow, Balsamo, these readers may be hundreds of thousands, if the Morands, of whom there are many, stick together. What can we do against that? People will call it publicity, and the Morands will be the moral power behind this publicity. What do you say to that, you short-sighted idiot? A hint, and Cagliostro stands in the pillory of publicity. . . ." And Ximenez stopped triumphantly.

The Sicilian looked compassionately at him. "But you will not give that hint," he said, "you need me and that is why you have come to me." And he lay back on his pillow.

Ximenez sprang angrily to his feet. "We need you!" he shrieked. "False conclusion, my dear Prince of the Orient. We need a personality at our heads who can impose upon the foolish masses; instead of Cagliostro who compromises us; we have won over the fat Duke Philip of Orleans. Yes, indeed! The silly donkey of Orleans, who is even more stupid than you are! He is sedulously preparing himself for the rôle of popular revolutionary hero and is now perpetually gushing about equality. Don't you suppose that a Duke can impress the masses even better than you can?" And Ximenez sat down again ashamed of his own outburst.

Cagliostro smiled calmly to himself. "I say, tell me, you are talking an awful lot to-day. What do you really want to get out of me?"

"Hm! Hm!" grunted Ximenez, and stared at him in aston-

ishment for a moment. "What do we want from you?" He was silent, following his own thoughts, as he slowly opened another bottle. "You are an amusing fellow, Cagliostro." It was the first time he had used this name for years. "I should never have believed that you would have taken all I said so calmly. You have stood the test well, and I am almost inclined to tell you right away what it is we want of you. We still attach some importance to you, but understand, to you alone." His disturbing piercing eyes rested coldly and significantly on the Sicilian.

"And what do you expect to get out of me?"

Ximenez surveyed him malevolently. "Carbonic acid gas is, they say, a deadly poison. But if, through human agency, it is mixed with good wine, the bubbles rise to the surface and you have champagne. Now what we expect from you is that you will intoxicate your foolish contemporaries."

"That is frank enough," Cagliostro replied, with an appreciatory nod. "Just go on talking quietly. I beg you to do so, for I have an idea. . . ." He hesitated a moment, and looked at the Spaniard with undisguised scorn, "that you are not such a blockhead as I have always thought."

A caustic smile formed a hundred wrinkles and folds in the spiteful face of the gaunt Spaniard. Well pleased, he scrutinised Cagliostro's fierce and bloated bull-dog snout. Thereupon he drew a thick brass watch from his pocket and looked at the time, frowned so that his eyes became abnormally large, and then folded his bony hands, making his long thin fingers crack unpleasantly. "Already three! It will soon be light. Your conversation pleases me, Cagliostro. But before we proceed, won't you have another drink? Yes? Splendid! And now just listen a moment! We wanted in your person to establish a primacy, which was to be given unconditional obedience, not because we really wished to obey you, but in order by this means to rid ourselves of the hateful necessity of rendering an account of our actions, which unfortunately we still have to do once a year, to the assembled delegates. If we had had

an absolute Primate at our head, we, as his all powerful ministers, would have had the free disposal of the enormous funds of the Freemasons, without having to listen to the arguments of pusillanimous fools. For the fairy-tale about the great unseen powers cannot be maintained for ever."

The explanation pleased Cagliostro. Even at the time when he had seen his name at the head of the list of signatures in that underground cavern near Strassburg, it had occurred to him that even in the academic organisation of Freemasonry, it was impossible to carry on without some backstair intrigue. What Ximenez had just outlined was nothing but fraud pure and simple. But how was he, the sham Primate, to protect himself against his swindling ministers tricking him in money matters? It was a burning question, and the idea of being merely a puppet did not satisfy his thirst for power.

Meanwhile the Spaniard had been carefully scrutinising Cagliostro's face and he now suddenly opened his attack. "On one condition you can still be Primate."

With tremendous solemnity he raised his first finger. "What is the punishment for treachery?—Death! And treachery was committed. Our last conference regarding the necklace was betrayed to the Queen."

With a start the Sicilian sat up. His chin was thrust forward, his bushy eyebrows projected like bristles, so fiercely did he frown. An expression of demoniacal bestiality had entered his face, and his cheeks quivered with a convulsive muscular movement. "Who was it?"

"Lorenza Feliciani, Countess Cagliostro, daughter of a Roman *batadore*. Ask her yourself. She will admit it."

Like one possessed, the Sicilian swept from his bed, and, carrying some of his bed clothes with him and leaving the rest to fall to the floor, he rushed bare-foot across the room, burst open the door, tore through the next room, stumbling over a chair which fell with a crash, burst open a further door, and then seemed to have reached his goal.

Had she been expecting his stormy entrance? She looked

at him quite calmly. The draught of air which his entrance had caused made the flame of the candle flicker towards the window; the pearly light of dawn was turning the room grey.

With bloodshot eyes he stared at her.

"It was I, Giuseppe. It was I who did it!"

"Why?"

She sat up and a look of gentle happiness suffused her face, which was no longer painted. "I was terribly alone, and I saw that they were all after you, like the devil pursuing a soul. They wanted to separate you from your angel, who is leading you to Rome. You ought never to have joined them, Giuseppe. You should have remained alone."

He looked suspiciously at her. "Alone? And what about you?"

"We are one! I was fighting for you. . . ."

He laughed scornfully. "For my soul, you goose? . . ."

She flushed, but her answer was clear and definite. "I fought for you."

Bewildered he went to the window and pulled back the curtain. Rosy clouds were sailing across the blue sky. Behind the dark pines on the dunes the sea was murmuring. The freshness of the dawn poured into the room.

He shivered. "For you!" . . . she had said. Extraordinary woman! She had succeeded excellently. In order to prevent the astute Freemasons from exploiting his genius, she had hurried straight to the Queen! Well, was not that courageous of her, eh? And thus she had set the whole witches' cauldron seething, the inevitable result of which would be the downfall of the lily. *Lilium pedibus destrue!* Which of them had succeeded in doing this? Why, Lorenza! Aye, she was a genius! With her at one's side, it would be possible to master the whole world. She had courage!

He felt that her eyes were resting upon him. Slowly he turned around. He wondered whether she was crying. But she was not crying. She was smiling.

"Do you forgive me?"



A DEAFENING CHEER ROSE ON THE QUAY FROM THE THROATS OF
THOUSANDS OF DISCIPLES SHOUTING THEIR FAREWELL

"We shall see," he bellowed, and stepped irresolutely towards the door. The thought of Ximenez waiting evidently amused him. What if he made him wait in vain? He sat down on the edge of the bed. She stroked his clenched fist, and he was obliged to smile too. What was it the Spaniard had just said? Death? Nonsense! He would be sure to meet him again and then over a bottle or two they would sign their pact. What could they do without him, without Cagliostro? And by flinging their threats to the wind, did he not give them the best possible proof of his courage?

Courage? His eyes wandered unsteadily. One had to be courageous to acquire power, and meanwhile. . . .

He looked at Lorenza. How warm and rosy she looked in the light of the dawn!

Sailors ran hither and thither across the deck. Shouts of command rang out on all sides, and lo! the anchor was weighed, and the three-master gave a great lurch.

The breakers roared. Cagliostro stood in his favourite bottle-green travelling coat and, by him, dressed completely in black like a nun, was Lorenza looking very pale. Raising his arm, he waved his sword.

A deafening cheer rose on the quay from the throats of thousands of disciples shouting their farewell greeting to their beloved Master. Flocks of seagulls soared with terrified cries into the air. A gun roared a salute. The *Good Hope* turned to the west and slowly got under way. Handkerchiefs and streamers waved from the shore. Cagliostro laid his arm on Lorenza's shoulder. The captain stepped forward and asked whether the Count and Countess would care to empty a bottle of wine to wish good speed to their journey.

The wind blew up. The French coast melted away on the horizon, but in the distance, where England lay, the sun sunk behind the clouds. The *Good Hope* was sailing with the wind behind her, and as she slowly advanced the thick fog of England rolled towards her from the west. The night promised

to be rough. In Boulogne, all had grown quiet again, and every-day life had been resumed. The host of the *Lys Blanc* was counting out the money which he had earned during the last three days, and he was obliged to smile.

In a small bedroom there was a light still burning. Benito had at last gone to bed after a magnificent spread, for which he had had to pay nothing. Although he was pleased with his new-found freedom, he could not help feeling a little homesick when he thought of his master.

Baudard and Ximenez were sitting alone over a bowl of punch which had grown tepid. The rosy Baudard looked careworn. "And what if Cagliostro blabs?" With icy coldness and determination, Ximenez replied, "In the *Good Hope* by which he is sailing, there is a letter addressed to Reynolds. There is no need to put Cagliostro out of the way. Ridicule will destroy him just as surely and from our point of view just as safely. For a few years more he will perhaps stay first here and then there, but matters will continually go worse with him and in the end he will creep up to the cross and die miserably."

"In Rome?"

Ximenez gave an eloquent shrug of his shoulders, and his piercing look boded no good. Baudard was silent. Outside the first gust of wind from the storm that was being swept from the west made the window frames rattle.

Rome

THE young Abbé, with his refined face, which was pale as wax, made the sign of the cross. The bells were ringing in all the towers, for to-morrow was the twenty-seventh of December, the Day of St. John the Evangelist. Opposite the priest there sat a man who was clearly ill at ease in the fashionable clothes of the day. He was tall and powerfully built, and of martial appearance, while his eyes had an unmistakable directness of look which savoured of Switzerland. It was a simple but comfortably furnished room in one of the alleys near St. Peter's. It was a grey day, and the mild wan December light filtered in through the lofty windows veiled by transparent white curtains.

"Yes, Baron de Planta, he lives here. I received your letter in good time and made enquiries. I succeeded in finding out a good deal, more than will please you and your exalted patron. Cagliostro is now in great danger. He has once more turned to Freemasonry. . . ."

"To Freemasonry?" Planta sprang to his feet in astonishment. "But then they must be persecuting him!"

"You know much, but not all," said the young Abbé smiling and carefully contemplating his slender finger tips. "It is not ordinary Freemasonry, but his own Egyptian variation—but whichever it is, the punishment for such things in Rome is death."

"I will save him! I have been sent to take him and his wife to France. Rohan. . . ."

The priest raised his first finger in warning. "Pray let me

beg you not to mention any names. The Inquisition is exceedingly active, Baron de Planta. And in any case your exalted patron has not been in very good odour here since the affair of the necklace."

Planta nodded thoughtfully. "And how are the two getting on?"

"Badly!"

"Tell me about them."

Silently the Abbé left his seat and glided with astonishing rapidity to the door, which he carefully opened, and looked out. Apparently satisfied, he returned. With an indulgent smile, he surveyed the agitated features of the Swiss, who had gone grey before his time.

"You probably know that Cagliostro was not able to remain in London, whither he had fled after his banishment from Paris?"

"Yes, the damned Freemasons persecuted him in every possible way—a Quaker and his daughter, and a certain lawyer named Reynolds, in connection with the theft of a necklace. It was all very confused and his former servant gave evidence against him."

The Abbé thoughtfully shook his head. "That would not have led to much, for Lord Gordon and the Swedenborgians remained true to him. But . . . the Freemasons knew of a better method—they made Cagliostro ridiculous. There was a journalist with a spiteful pen, who was perpetually writing in the papers, so that the Italian gradually succumbed beneath the curse of ridicule. He became a figure of fun, Baron de Planta, and nobody can survive that! And the worst of it is. . . ." Here the priest paused thoughtfully, while amid the deep roar of the bigger bells, the tinkling chimes of the smaller ones could be heard.

The Swiss could no longer endure the silence. "What is the worst of it?"

"The worst of it is that when once a man has become a regular figure of fun he remains so in the eyes of the world for

all time. Nay, it goes even deeper than that. The stamp of ridicule enters the soul of the subject and makes him uncertain of himself, so that he actually becomes ridiculous!"

"So they have destroyed Cagliostro!" Planta murmured gloomily.

"That is what they have done."

Timidly the Swiss raised his head. "And what about his wife, that beautiful stirring figure? How is she bearing it all?"

The Abbé looked furtively at him. "I knew you would enquire about her. But let me tell you something else first. Well, Cagliostro fled to Switzerland. He remained in Bâle for six months. Then they made a laughing stock of him. His 'New Jerusalem' which he tried to found in partnership with the German mystic Lavater, came to grief through the ridicule of the newspapers. All his patrons withdrew their adherence. He then went to Biel, and in three months the same thing again occurred."

The Swiss drew himself up and stiffened. "Oh, if only they moved to the home of the Plantas in quiet Zuos, what a different atmosphere reigns there! There they might have rested themselves."

The Abbé shook his head and smiled. "Cagliostro in a Swiss village? With nothing but mountains as credulous listeners and disciples? Unthinkable! But hear the rest. The curse of ridicule had already begun to poison Cagliostro's being. His great secret, of which he had always been so proud, began to fail him—his power of sending people into a somnambulistic trance by an exercise of will. Even in Bâle, the so-called 'Doves' with whom he was in the habit of working, instead of being the angelic beauties of old, had become strange long haired apes, so that once there was actually a panic among his audience, as they imagined that the hall was filled with evil spirits. But in Biel things became so bad, that he could not even send children off into a magnetic sleep, and he had to have recourse to ordinary conjurer's tricks. The more he brooded over it, the clearer it became to him that his powers

were failing, and as the recognition of this fact was unpleasant he at last ceased to brood and allowed things to take their course.

“Millions have passed through his hands, and not a farthing has remained in them. In Bâle he was already pawning his jewellery. After a short demonstration in Aix in Savoy, he went at the beginning of the New Year to Italy. In Turin he was officially informed that he was to regard himself as an outlaw. A short sojourn in Genoa soon taught him that he could spin no silk in that town. The Genoese had no time for the great dreams of lofty souls. For had not their greatest son turned his back upon them in disappointment three hundred years before—the great Christopher, who crossed the ocean with the Holy Child in his arms and discovered a vast new quarter of the globe?

“So at last he landed in Rovereto, imagining he would at last have breathing space again. For here there were true believers who through the agency of the Great Coft’s Egyptian magic, accompanied by little statues of Apis and enveloped in voluminous clouds of blue steam, might be aroused to a state of childish enthusiasm. Here he found true believers, who paid ready money when they were given the diploma of Master, and noble ladies, who blushing deeply, arrayed themselves in seemly fashion before they allowed the famous ribbon to be tied about their thighs. But alas! thou dense and cruel Emperor Joseph, thou hadst but little sympathy for the careworn soul of thy distinguished namesake from Palermo. Why that iniquitous edict whereby thou didst forbid the practice of medicine in thy town of Rovereto? By means of what Masonic rationalism didst thou so harshly sever the lifestrings of poor Giuseppe, whereby he managed to eke out a slender livelihood? Was it meet and right to take away the fire from the mouth of so great a fire-eater?

“Shaking the provincial dust from his feet, the Great Orient hastened to the See of Trent. The Prince Bishop was interested in the science of chemistry. But alas; the road connecting

the tiresome science of chemistry to the entertaining sport of alchemy was hard to find. Yet did Cagliostro find it. For had he not a weakness for dignitaries of the Church?"

Planta flushed angrily. That was a hit at Rohan.

The Abbé hastened to remove the bad impression his mockery had made upon his guest, and continued calmly, "While Cagliostro was seeking and smelting and boiling in the alchemistic laboratory and making his experiments for the discovery of the *lapis philosophorum*, his wife was not idle."

The eyes of the Swiss grew hard. "Countess Lorenza is a pure and wonderful creature," he exclaimed by way of warning.

The young priest gave a deprecating wave of his hand. "I know that! It was only with the greatest difficulty that Cagliostro succeeded in making some headway in Trent. But the Countess Lorenza found it much easier to make her way at the Court of the Prince Bishop.

"The atmosphere of Trent, which is one of sincere piety, revived once more in her breast the one dream of her life—Rome, her old father, the honest *batadore*, and the dear familiar old *estrada dei Pellegrini*. In every tissue of her body Lorenza longed to be back in Rome. She was seized with homesickness when she thought of the palaces, the Tiber and the peaceful glories of St. Peter's; nay, even St. Angelo lost all its terrors in her memory, and became a pleasure to behold, like a strict old nurse to whom a child has grown accustomed. Rome! That would be their last resting place after all these dreadful long years of wandering! Rome! It would certainly mean poverty and humiliation after so much wealth and pomp, but would it not also offer an honourable competency? Giuseppe would be able to help her old father in his workshop and eventually take it over. With his large connection, it would be easy for him to make the business flourish, so that in course of time they might even attain a position of affluence. And finally—Rome! In Rome one was protected from the howling devil, who is ever on the prowl to bewilder and corrupt the souls of men! One was protected from the Freemasons!

"Thus what she told the priest who listened to her was not a confession. She could quite calmly confide in him without fearing he might betray her. The old priest was the Father Confessor of the Prince Bishop, and the words of the desperate and wondrously beautiful woman stirred him so that he promised to help her. As he distrusted all the brilliant soap bubbles of the human imagination and thus regarded Cagliostro's arrival with a certain suspicion, Lorenza's plan to make her husband her old father's assistant seemed to him full of possibilities, and the following day Lorenza was secretly summoned to appear before the Prince Bishop.

"Yes, he would certainly help, not only with introductions to the pillars of the Holy City, but with money for the extension of the business of Lorenza's father, and for the foundation of a comfortable bourgeois home. Albeit, the Prince Bishop added that it behooved all connected with the scheme to be wiser than the serpent, for it was essential that Cagliostro should suspect nothing of the conspiracy which had been formed to save his soul. For the moment, therefore, everything would have to go on as usual, but after a little while the Bishop would persuade His Majesty, the Emperor, to write him a letter protesting against Cagliostro's sojourn in Trent. Meanwhile Madonna Lorenza would have to plant in her husband's breast the desire to try his luck in Rome. For what alternative would be left him, but to take the road they had marked out for him? In Rome, Freemasonry was punishable with death, but Cagliostro was far too clever to light a fire in Rome which would ultimately consume him! And with the assurance that the Bishop would keep everything secret, the conspirators parted.

"Thus a month went by, when one morning Cagliostro was summoned before His Eminence. With pursed lips, the Prince Bishop informed the Master that he had received a letter from His Apostolic Majesty, which gave drastic expression to the Emperor Joseph's indignation that Monseigneur should allow a charlatan like Cagliostro to sojourn in Trent.

"Another trick on the part of the Freemasons, thought

Cagliostro, and with his chin well thrust forward, he was about to deliver a stormy oration against these slandering Judases, when he caught the prince Bishop looking scoffingly at him out of the corner of his eyes, and willy nilly he had to subside. It was as if the cold hand of Fate had been lightly but menacingly laid on his shoulder. 'Now think it over, my dear Count, and decide what you would like to do. Let me have your answer in a week. Meanwhile you may rest assured of my good will.' Cagliostro went home.

"Where should he go now? France, England, Spain, Portugal, Russia, Courland, Poland, were closed to him, as were also the States of the King of Sardinia, the Republic of Venice and the Kingdom of the two Sicilies. Owing to Joseph's disapproval, the whole of the German Empire must be added to the list. With the exception of the northern countries, the idea of which was extremely distasteful to him, there remained only the Netherlands, Turkey and the Papal States. But Holland was more deeply infected with Freemasonry than Switzerland, and as for Turkey—that was out of the question; for in spite of Medina and Trebizond, he did not wish to have anything to do with the people of the East. The only alternative open to him, therefore, was the Papal States, and after all, he might perhaps do worse than seek refuge beneath the motherly pinions of the Church! At least in Rome he would be free from the machinations of the Freemasons, and could shear his little sheep in peace. Moreover, there was a good fat sheep there, for the Pope had enormous funds at his disposal, almost as much if not more than the Freemasons. It would certainly be more difficult to get at the money. But nothing was impossible in this world! It only had to be willed, and even the Catholic Church might be put into a magnetic sleep and forced to deliver up the keys to the treasure vaults in St. Angelo!

"On the following day, Lorenza began to lay her mine. She did not meet with any resistance worth mentioning. His silence led her to gather that he had already formed a plan.

"And she was right. As a matter of fact a plan was already

forming in Cagliostro's mind. He too wanted to go to Rome. He had made up his mind to throw himself at the feet of a priest, preferably the Father Confessor of the Prince Bishop, as a penitent sinner imploring forgiveness for his sins, and tell him that the one wish of his heart was to be taken once more into the bosom of the Church. They would certainly be overjoyed at having brought back so black a sheep as himself to the true faith. Then they would give him everything he asked for—letters of recommendation to the Papal See, and possibly money as well. The fact that this hypocritical and lying confession would make him guilty of deadly sin, did not trouble his crafty soul which yearned only for money, pleasure and power. One fat little mortal sin more or less—what did that matter now?

“At the end of May they went to Rome.

“At first they took a nice house on the *Piazza di Spagna*. But this was soon found to be too expensive, and yielding to the entreaties of Lorenza, who wanted to live near her parents, he took some rooms in the *Piazza Farnese*, whence the *Estrade di Pellegrini*, where the *batadore* carried on his trade, was only a short walk.

“On the very first visit the two paid to the old Felicianis, a violent altercation took place between Lorenza's father and her husband, for the worthy old Roman would have nothing to do with his son-in-law's title of Count, and all attempts on the part of his wife to pacify them failed. The two men parted in bitter hostility and refused to be reconciled. Giuseppe, it is true, only laughed at the old man for being such a fool. But he could not prevent Lorenza from occasionally going to see her people, for it would have created too bad an impression in Rome, if he had forbidden his wife to go to the house of her parents.

“For some time Giuseppe was very careful of what he did. He called on the various Cardinals and other high dignitaries of the Church to whom he had been recommended, and met with a friendly though cautious reception. It seemed as though

they wanted to wait and see whether his conversion would prove permanent.

“His attempts to renew relations with the Egyptian Lodges, which he had founded all over the world, failed. He either received no answer at all, or else it was couched in offensive terms, and nothing came of his great schemes. For he had really degenerated into a schemer. Which proves, does it not, dear Baron Planta, how deeply the poison of ridicule must have destroyed his resolute spirit?

“He then made a grandiloquent offer to the Government of Berne saying he would unearth the masses of gold and silver and precious stones which must be lying hidden beneath the Swiss glaciers, and bring them to light, suggesting that the glaciers should be sprinkled with vinegar and saltpetre, when they would immediately melt away and lay bare their treasures to the world for all to behold. He first discussed the scheme with a Roman merchant, who appeared to be very rich and from whom he hoped to obtain a little money. The merchant, who was apparently no fool, had only one fault to find with the audacious plan, and that was that the melting of the glaciers would flood the whole of Switzerland. Cagliostro, however, knew better. Switzerland possessed countless rivers, lakes and especially subterranean streams, all of which would absorb the water from the melted glaciers. In his noble modesty, the Grand Master only demanded from the Bernese Government one third of the treasures which would thus be brought to light, and the advance of the ridiculously small sum of a thousand ducats. But Berne did not respond.

“Meanwhile disorder had begun to spread in France, and the people had constituted the National Assembly. On the 14th of July, the Bastille was stormed and the insurrections of the 5th and 6th of October had done the rest. To the crafty mind of the Sicilian, the time now seemed ripe to fish in the troubled waters of Paris. He sent a spirited letter to the National Assembly, in which he called attention to his services in bringing about the Revolution, nor did he fail to point out that in

his farewell address to the French people, which had since become famous, he had prophesied the convocation of the States General, as well as the overthrow of the Bastille and its consequences. The cry uttered by Fréteau de St. Juste when in August of the year 1785 he had heard about the scandal of the necklace, had become the sad truth. It was an epoch-making and most auspicious event big with promise. A Cardinal as villain, and the Queen in a trial for fraud! Dirt on both the Cross and the Sceptre! What a triumph for the cause of freedom!

"Cagliostro's appeal to the National Assembly, however, remained unanswered. Meanwhile his resources were rapidly dwindling away, and the couple were living almost like beggars." Here the shrewd young priest stopped and looked out of the window.

Planta rose slowly. "The poor young woman!" And he passed his hands over his eyes. "If only I had known this sooner! I do not doubt that Monseigneur . . . that my exalted patron. . . ." He stopped in confusion, and then pulled himself energetically together. "I will go to-morrow morning at midday and take the two to France. The prince is longing to see his friend. Meanwhile prepare the passports for me, please."

The Abbé also had risen and bowed his acquiescence. "You were so warmly recommended to me, Baron de Planta, by my tutor, the Abbé Georgel, that I shall do everything in my power to be of service to you. But you may well imagine what little love we have for the Freemasons, even of the Egyptian brand. To-morrow you will have the passports, Baron, provided that. . . ." He stopped and listened in the direction of the door.

"Provided what?" whispered the Swiss anxiously.

"Provided that the Inquisition does not already know everything. In that case you have come too late."

"Why?"

"Freemasonry in Rome means prison and death."

"And you think?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "I do not know. But seeing

that at Abbé Georgel's request I have been able to find out all I have, it is unlikely that the all powerful organisation of the Inquisition should have had any difficulty in discovering at least as much as I have. . . ." He was silent and listened intently. Then he whispered almost inaudibly, "Go! To-morrow morning in front of the *Palazza Farnese*. At twelve o'clock punctually."

From every tower the bells were ringing. Lorenza sat quietly at a little window on the second floor of the dilapidated old house on the *Piazza Farnese* where she and her husband eked out a frugal existence in three tiny rooms.

Had she expected this from Rome? Lost in thought she sat there with bitter unrest in her heart. All would have gone very well, and she and her mother would have succeeded in reconciling her old father and Giuseppe if. . . . And she closed her eyes in horror. . . . If one day Benito had not turned up. Could he have been sent by the Freemasons to dispatch Giuseppe to his doom? For the Freemasons had not moved for a long while.

At that time they had been without a servant for some considerable period, and Lorenza had gone herself to open the door. Benito had entered with a half impudent, half cringing bow, and had at once made himself at home. He was well but simply dressed and showed by his manner that he enjoyed a position of security. Blinking slyly, he had suggested to the Master that they should take a little morning stroll, and it was night before Cagliostro returned dead drunk. Ever since that day the two had been inseparable. What was behind it? Lorenza did not know, but she augured no good; for night after night, Giuseppe returned home drunk. He was in high spirits, sang indecent songs at the top of his voice, and even seemed to have money. It is true that Lorenza would not touch a farthing of it, so deeply did the scamp Benito revolt her.

And yet he was not in any way insolent to her, but on the contrary exaggeratedly courteous. On one occasion only did

he have the effrontery to mention her "charming friend" the Countess Jeanne de la Motte, who, with the help of friends, presumably the Freemasons, had escaped from the Salpêtrière, and was living in London in affluent circumstances, as the much admired mistress of the fallen French Finance Minister, Calonne. She was engaged in compiling certain revelations about Marie Antoinette which promised to be exceedingly spicy. A glance from Lorenza had sufficed to make him shut up.

What the two were doing, she did not know. Giuseppe had told her that Benito was well off and had a flourishing business in Naples and that they were at present engaged in arranging a great coup in Rome. No, it could not be any straightforward business; that jail bird Benito was capable of anything, and when Giuseppe smelt money he was always so weak. What could they be doing with themselves? They were certainly not frequenting respectable haunts, for Giuseppe always smelt horribly of garlic when he came home, and had adopted villainous manners and ways of speech such as were common in the Ghetto, the lowest and dirtiest part of the city where the Roman Jews lived.

Benito had turned up in November and Christmas was now over. To-morrow was the festival of St. John the Evangelist. The bells were pealing from every tower, those of St. Peter clanging loud above the other murmuring buzzing bells. Thoughtful and weary unto death, Lorenza sat at the little window on the second floor and looked out on to the *Piazza Farnese*. Outside the dusk was falling in violet shadows over the town. The two fountains on the *piazza* were playing their thin silvery sprays. Lorenza's heart was seized with a numbing sense of fear.

In the world outside something was happening, which would end in great disaster for Giuseppe. Feverish anxiety made her spring to her feet. She would hurry over to her parents and implore their help. All the money she had brought from Trent and which up to the present she had carefully preserved, she would sacrifice in order to save Giuseppe. Perhaps there

was still time for them to flee. She was just about to leave her rooms, when he came in. Fumes of wine preceded him.

"That hound Benito has left me, and as the swine keeps me so short of money, I could not wait any longer for him. Have you anything to drink?" She shook her head. "It doesn't matter!" he rejoined good naturedly. "We shall have to talk dry." He tried to kiss her, but she wriggled away and with a smile he reeled into a chair.

For a little while he muttered to himself in a loud and shaky voice. Outside the night was falling. The bells were still ringing. Cagliostro listened. "What are they ringing like mad for?" he asked cheerfully. "To-morrow is the festival of St. John the Evangelist," Lorenza replied, and was terrified at her own words, as if she had said something that could never be recalled. But Giuseppe crowed aloud, "St. John the Evangelist! Fancy the old Freemason fellow! A good omen! I shall be a Freemason again!" He stretched himself out. "Be a Freemason again! It is a profitable calling. Benito thinks so too. . . ." He was on the point of falling asleep.

Again Lorenza was numb with fear. "Giuseppe, Giuseppe! I feel so frightened!" He woke up and laughed softly. "When we moved in here in May it seems to me they were also ringing furiously. It was Whitsuntide. I wonder whether it means that to-morrow there will be an end of the whole glorious mess! Shut up, you jangling clattering idiots! But it is beautiful to hear the little voices of the smaller bells ringing while the bigger ones are still clanging. Why didn't I become a bell-founder after all, like my two uncles in Sicily? Perhaps one of those two noisy devils outside came from the workshops of the Fratelli Cagliostro. But they would be real Cagliostros, more real than I am, Lorenza. The name Balsamo did not suit me, did it? I really cannot understand how my beautiful mother was able to marry such a name, for after all, she was a Cagliostro. I wonder how the dear old woman is faring. I ought really to have sent her some money, drunk and debauched swine that I am! Perhaps the poor little woman is long since

dead. . . . But she was a clever little body, and will have made her way quite well. She thought a lot of Giuseppe and must have prayed for him." He could not help laughing. It seemed so funny that anyone in the world should pray for him. Shaking his head, he continued, "Perhaps Rohan occasionally prays for me. From all accounts he appears to have become very pious now. Ha! Rohan! . . . He was one of the old aristocracy. You always liked him too."

It was the first time that Cagliostro had ever spoken to his wife so honestly about himself. His tone terrified Lorenza. "I am frightened, Giuseppe! Misfortune of some sort is overtaking us."

He raised himself a little and murmured, "Misfortune did you say? That's just what I thought a moment ago as I crossed the *Ponte Cestio* and saw a sort of huge black cloud hanging to the north over St. Angelo. They say terrible things about the dungeons in St. Angelo. Perhaps some day I shall lie in one of them!"

Lorenza cried out, "What have you done?" He had already recovered his good spirits. "Oh, nothing! Benito and I, you see, have founded an Egyptian Freemason Lodge in the Ghetto, for the cursed spies of the Inquisition, of which the town is full, care little what happens in the Ghetto. Our aim is to smuggle the ideas of the French Revolution into Rome."

With quivering lips, Lorenza stammered, "Freemasonry again! And what if Benito is playing a double game with you?"

Cagliostro, Cagliostro the incomprehensible, laughed gently. "Then in the first place there will be St. Angelo for me, and after that. . . ." With an unmistakable gesture, he passed his finger round his fat neck. Lorenza turned as white as a sheet. "Fly, Giuseppe! The spies are already on their way; I feel it!" And she dropped on her knees before him.

He fondled her hair affectionately with his hands. "Why do you excite yourself so? Have you betrayed me a second time you little goose? No, no, don't cry! What you did in

Paris that time was stupid enough, I know you won't do it again." And he drew her up and set her on his knee. It was already so dark that neither could see the face of the other. She could only groan, "Fly!"

For a dreadful moment he was silent. Then slowly in a sing-song voice, he replied, "No, Lorenza, I can no longer fly. And if I could, I should not know where to go. Besides, I have no money. This is my last attempt. If in a month's time at most I have not found fifty fools, I will give it up and creep to the foot of the Cross, and be my father-in-law's journeyman and rear a family with you. Just give me this one month's respite! Cagliostro as a *batadore*! . . . No, you little goose! I would prefer St. Angelo! In any case my life is no longer worth much. It has been an extraordinary life, and yet there was very little that was extraordinary in it. I do not even know whether honestly speaking I have the right to regard myself as a great rogue, my little hen. When I look back it always seems to me as if all the successes and failures of my life were pure accident, impish, knavish tricks of Fate who wanted to see dear, fat, stupid Giuseppe gallop through the world on his hobby horse. It is true I always fell on my feet again, but more often than not without quite knowing myself how it happened. And if at last I fail to fall on my feet for once, would it be such a terrible pity? Oh no! Even then I shall make a great dramatic display. But really it will afford me the greatest amusement to see how they manage to get the better of me in the end. They will find me a hard nut!" And he laughed.

Lorenza clung closely to him and wept. "Giuseppe, we have now been married twenty years without my knowing it." And she stopped. He tickled her to cheer her. "What is it you have not known, my dove?" She trembled and whispered softly, as only a frightened heart can whisper, "That I love you!"

In the short interval that followed, neither of them quite knew how to behave to the other. But even apothecaries sometimes grow up, and all that glitters is not gold. Cagliostro,

thou Great Orient and King of the very bluest blue steam, who whispered into your ear the words which you now roared deafeningly through the darkness with your trumpet voice, "Little hen, little hen, it pleases me to hear you say that now. But you see, it is not quite in order, after all! It is not Giuseppe Balsamo that you love, neither is it the elegant Count Cagliostro, but only the bit of a truant apothecary's apprentice from the Benfratelli whom you love, because his gasping neck is in the noose. But just you wait and see! He will tear the noose from his neck again, the sly fox, and so let us forget the words you have just said, for what will happen afterwards? Afterwards you will find him unendurable again, the drunken sodden old scamp. And you will be right, for he can hardly hope to appeal to anybody else, and it is perhaps my greatest failing that he appeals to me so much!" And he laughed a thick guttural laugh.

She had slipped from his lap and with trembling fingers was trying in vain to kindle a light. "Giuseppe, I have a little money. Won't you try to fly? I am so frightened!" He pricked his ears. "You have some money?" She told him how she came to have it. He neighed contentedly. "Excellent, my dear! Then we shall at once invest a few of the gold pieces in some good champagne. I have not drunk any for such a long time. Come along! Banish care from your mind, and let us be merry again this evening, my precious little hen!"

She implored "Giuseppe!" He grunted. "Oh, stop that! Hand over the money!"

Suddenly the bell rang. Giuseppe lighted a candle. Lorenza went as white as death. It was Benito. With a crafty smile, he entered the room and made an awkward bow. Lorenza looked coldly and steadily at him. He became embarrassed and croaking with exaggerated eagerness, he said, "Forgive me, Master, for keeping you waiting so long, but I have succeeded in finding some new members for our Lodge, and I will take the liberty of bringing nine brothers to your rooms to-morrow at eight, when you will be able to read them your



ROME

beautiful manuscript on the constitution of Egyptian Freemasonry. You have it with you, of course?"

"Of course I have," cried Cagliostro, and thrust a hand into his breast. "That immortal work dictated by the Great Unseen Architect of the Universe never leaves me!"

"Then I shall not disturb you any longer!" And Benito bowed. "Madame Lorenza seems in any case to be somewhat indignant with me for coming so late. *Au revoir!* To-morrow early, punctually at eight!" And with much bowing and scraping, he shuffled backwards out of the room.

As if relieving her mind of a great burden, Lorenza gave a muffled groan. "Your death lay in his eyes! He has betrayed you!" Cagliostro breathed deeply. "Nonsense!" he exclaimed, pronouncing the word as though he were snapping at her. "And now let us be off! I must get myself gloriously drunk again this evening and once more behold the stars roll in the sky. Even the stupidest of apothecary apprentices must get thoroughly drunk occasionally. Here, hand me the money!" His tone was imperious. Meekly Lorenza obeyed.

It had been a long evening. The bulldog lay in leaden sleep, snoring on the bed, but Lorenza stood motionless at the window and looked out on the empty *piazza* which lay so peaceful in the pale moonlight, as if it knew naught of care or treachery. The great palace which shut in the *piazza* loomed dark and mysterious before her, and cast such heavy shadows that it brought the thought of prison walls involuntarily to her mind. She strongly suspected that Benito, acting on the orders of Giuseppe's enemies, the Freemasons, had lured her husband into this trap in order to ruin him, and that at eight o'clock in the morning this Judas was going to bring the police to the house.

Oh, why had Giuseppe always cast her warnings to the wind? That he must end badly, was only too clear from the Twelfth House of his horoscope; the House of Enemies and Prisons, Saturn, Jupiter and Mars were seen in conjunction, which

pointed to armed ecclesiastics; and did not the moon in Giuseppe's Fourth House stand in terrible opposition to the Sun upon whom Mars, the bearer of evil, shed his baneful rays? Moreover it was just at this juncture that Uranus, the newly discovered and fateful planet of upheavals and blows from Fate, was passing over the vulnerable point in Giuseppe's horoscope. Imprisonment and death might be the consequence.

On the other hand, Lorenza was aware that God had given mankind the science of astrology in order to enable them to foresee misfortune and ward it off. She must do everything in her power to save her husband. It had been his misfortune, even in the Paris days, that he had always had others at his side, and had allowed himself to be pushed on instead of standing alone and acting of his own free will. That had been the cause of his downfall. And were things any different now in Rome? Oh, she was so certain of it! It had always been other people who had led her Giuseppe astray and brought him into evil ways. For, after all, he was a good-natured creature, and had so much humour and strength. He must not perish! She must save him!

But how? Well, this much at least was clear. She must secretly smuggle the Freemason manuscript and the correspondence over to her parents. Her father would most certainly allow himself to be softened by her tears. And while it was still night she would hire a horse and carriage and before the day dawned pass out of the gates of Rome with Giuseppe, who would have to be disguised as a working coppersmith. In the Alban Hills there were secret retreats in abundance where Giuseppe could hide for a week or so, until he could escape to a more hospitable land and seek his fortune there. Perhaps he might go to kind Rohan, who had been his friend. And she would remain in Rome, quietly living with her parents and helping her mother, while she waited for him.

It was now four o'clock. Quickly she wrapped up the manuscripts, flung a simple dark shawl about her shoulders, put a plain veil about her head and thus disguised as a poor working

woman, ran out into the street. It was only a few steps to the *Estrade di Pellegrini*. But she was never to reach her parents' house. Out of the shadow of the *Piazza Farnese*, followed by two soldiers of the Swiss Guard, there stepped a slim officer. "Countess Cagliostro!" rang a young voice. "We have been expecting you!" He tried courteously to take the parcel from her, but she resisted him. He laughed an unfriendly laugh. "Oh, the secret correspondence! I understand! And so you have made yourself an accomplice, *signora*! I arrest you! Take the prisoner to St. Angelo!"

When Cagliostro awoke the light of the grey dawn had already penetrated into his room. A bell chimed the hour of eight. Eight o'clock! Benito and his friends, was the thought that passed through his mind. He yawned and laboriously sat up. Where was Lorenza? He called out to her. No answer! And then a dreadful suspicion occurred to him, taking his breath away; and, clad only in his dirty nightgown, he sprang up and ran bare foot through the cold rooms. They were empty, but he immediately discovered that his papers had vanished. Oh, the stupid goose! He cursed aloud and gnawed his nails fiercely. Hurried thoughts tumbled over each other in his mind. What if at the command of those sons of the filthiest of devils, the Freemasons, Benito had really betrayed him? Oh, that Ximenez! He was capable of it! Had they really got him in a trap? In Rome death was the punishment of Freemasonry. But would they really dare to molest him, him the great Cagliostro of whom the whole world talked? Would they ever dare to create such a gigantic scandal, or lay hands on him, the idolised Grand Orient of the World?

No, they would never dare to do it!

Were they actually daring? The bells were ringing for the festival of St. John the Evangelist; grand and solemn was the roar of the bells of St. Peter!

Ridiculous idea! Of course they were not thinking of seizing him, and if they did, they would at the worst allow him to run

away. Hurriedly, he tried to dress. His limbs were stiff with fatigue. But where could Lorenza be? He was freezing. With chattering teeth he struggled with his boots. His head was swimming. Had not the front door just been opened below?

Heavy steps creaked on the stairs. Like a flash, he jumped up and dashed to the window. In the twilight of the cold December morning, he saw that some men of the Swiss Guard had surrounded the house. The heavy footsteps halted outside his door.

They will never dare. . . .

From every tower, the bells were ringing. With a face distraught he stared at the door. Heavy blows were thundering upon the wood demanding admittance.

THE END

Epilogue

"I BELIEVE that Nature produces a creature like Cagliostro only once in a century." Seeing that so distinguished a thinker as Lavater did not hesitate to express himself in this manner, the author of the foregoing narrative will perhaps be excused for having turned his attention to so enigmatic a figure—a man who, glorified by some and scoffed at by others, pursued his boisterous way, through frauds, swindles and triumphs, until at last his career ended in the stillness of death in the dark grey fortified walls of San Leone near Urbino.

As the author is now about to take leave of his hero, and to write the last lines to a book which has been the fruit of two years of labour, it seems to him a fitting moment in which to dispel certain misunderstandings which may have formed in the minds of one or the other of his readers, the more so as this book, which is a romance based on a free handling of the historical material, was not intended as anything more than an attempt artistically to depict the portrait of Cagliostro in accordance with the spirit of his Age and of his environment.

Friends have called the author's attention to the fact that the Freemasons of the present day may feel that they have been assailed in this book, and may assume that the narrative contains attacks upon their Order. But nothing of the kind was intended; for, in the first place, the author knows much too little of modern Freemasonry to be in a position to criticise it either favourably or unfavourably. And, secondly, he does not believe that modern Freemasonry can possibly feel that it is affected by the foolish blunders of the past, particularly as these blunders are more or less proved historically. For the much glorified eighteenth century, the "gallant Age," the "era of enlightenment" was also a period in which much nonsense

flourished, and in which every kind of tomfoolery immediately found enthusiastic admirers.

Others felt it incumbent upon them to remind the author that his portrait of Prince Rohan might involve him in a charge of hostility to the Church. But this is absurd! For nothing seems to the author more unquestionable than the salutary authority of the Church. It is surely not his fault that, as a matter of fact, in the world of that day far more grotesque things happened than his narrative would lead one to suspect, the reason being that the Age was wholly different from our own, and the views held by the "society" of the time were much more frankly immoral.

Many have taken exception to the references to astrology that recur throughout the book, and have felt inclined to regard the author as a hierophant of that art. The author confesses that he has dabbled in this extraordinarily interesting subject, but his knowledge of it amounts to hardly more than that of a dilettante, and, moreover, he has endeavoured not to refer to it more than the inevitable sequence of events rendered necessary. In this matter, as in all others, he has gone to the utmost pains to keep his own personality and views as much as possible in the background, in order to let his hero's destiny develop along natural lines, as the outcome of his character, his Age and his circumstances.

He can therefore feel confident of being able to meet all political criticism, whether from the Left or from the Right, by pointing out that this book has nothing whatever to do with either politics or party disputes. Just as the cunning hero of the book held himself entirely aloof from politics, and was guided on his way by the stars above him and within him, so this book tries to be free from all partisanship with regard to the questions discussed in it, some of which are even now topical. For, after all, it is meant as a work of fiction, the narrative of an exceptional career, drawn from the mental picture which the author had formed of his hero, and based upon the ruthless power of destiny which he found in the picture—nothing more.

Any attempt at taking sides would have amounted to a gross error in style, any intrusion of the author's personality would have been no more than a lack of taste; for in these pages, Cagliostro was intended to romp through the world just as merrily, just as brutally, and just as craftily and slyly as he did a hundred and fifty years ago.

And so farewell, my fat and jolly friend, with the "front of brass" as Carlyle called thee! To this great author, and to thine own mighty shadow, which stood out in wondrous contrast amid the soap-bubbles of thine Age—to thee, thou brightest of the myths of thy century, this book is indebted for its being!

JOHANNES VON GUENTHER.

September, 1927.



NEW YORK

Publishers of BOOKS and of
HARPER'S MAGAZINE

Established 1817





